

THE FROZEN PIRATE

W. CLARK RUSSELL

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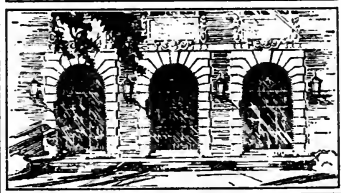
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THE
FROZEN PIRATE

BY
W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF "THE WRECK OF THE GROSVENOR," "THE LADY MAUD,"
"A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. II.

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THE FROZEN PIRATE.



CHAPTER I.

WE TALK OVER OUR SITUATION.

THAT night, as afterwards, Tassard occupied the berth that he was used to sleep in before he was frozen. Although I had not then the least fear that he would attempt any malignant tricks with me whilst we remained in this posture, the feeling that he lay in the berth next but one to mine made me uneasy in spite of my reasoning; and I was so nervous as to silently shoot a great iron bolt, so that it would have been impossible to enter without beating the door in.

In sober truth, the sight of the treasure had put a sort of fever into my imagination, of the heat and effects of which I was not completely sensible until I was alone in my cabin and swinging in the darkness. That the value of what I had seen came to ninety or a hundred thousand pounds of

our money I could not doubt ; and I will not deny that my fancy was greatly excited by thinking of it. But there was something else. Suppose we should have the happiness to escape with this treasure, then I was perfectly certain the Frenchman would come between me and my share of it. This apprehension threading my heated thoughts of the gold and silver kept me restless during the greater part of the night, and I also held my brains on the stretch with devices for saving ourselves and the treasure ; yet I could not satisfy my mind that anything was to be done unless Nature herself assisted us in freeing the schooner.

However, as it happened, the gale roared for a whole week, and the cold was so frightful and the air so charged with spray and hail that we were forced to lie close below with the hatches on for our lives. It was true Cape Horn weather, with seas as high as cliffs, and a westering tendency in the wind that flung sheets of water through the ravine, which must have quickly filled the hollow and built us up in ice to the height of the rails but for the strong slope down which the water rushed as fast as it was hurled.

I never needed to peep an inch beyond the companion-way to view the sky; nor for the matter of that was there ever any occasion to leave the cabin to guess at the weather, for the perpetual thunder of it echoed strong in every part of the vessel below, and the whole fabric was constantly shivering to the blows of the falls of water on her decks.

At first the Frenchman and I would sit in the greatest fear imaginable, constantly expecting some mighty disaster, such as the rending of the ice under our keel and our being swallowed up, or the coming together of the slopes in such a manner as to crush the ship, or the fall upon her of ice weighty enough to beat her flat; though perhaps this we least feared, for unless the storm changed the whole face of the cliffs, there was no ice in our neighbourhood to serve us in that way. But as the time slipped by and nothing worse happened than one sharp movement only in the vessel, following the heels of a great noise like a cannon discharged just outside; though this movement scared us nearly out of our senses, and held us in a manner dumbfounded for the

rest of the day ; I say, the time passing and nothing more terrifying than what I have related happening, we took heart and waited with some courage and patience for the gale to break, never doubting that we should find a wonderful change when we surveyed the scene from the heights.

We lived well, sparing ourselves in nothing that the vessel contained, the abundance rendering stint idle ; the Frenchman cooked, for he was a better hand than I at that work, and provided several relishable sea-pies, cakes, and broths. As for liquor, there was enough on board to drown the pair of us twenty times over : wines of France, Spain, Portugal, very choice fine brandy, rum in plenty, such variety indeed as enabled us to brew a different kind of punch every day in the seven. But we were much more careful with the coal, and spared it to the utmost by burning the hammocks, bedding, and chests that lay in the forecastle ; that is to say, we burnt these things by degrees, the stock being excessive, and by judiciously mixing them with coal and wood, they made good warming fires, and as tinder lasted long too.

We occupied one morning in thoroughly overhauling the fore-castle for such articles of value as the sailors had dropped or forgotten in their flight ; but found much less than I had expected from the sight of the money and other things on the deck. There was little in this way to be found in the cabins : I mean in the captain's cabin which I used, and the one next it that had been the mate's, for of course I did not search Mr. Tassard's berth. But though it was quite likely that the seamen had plundered these cabins before they left the ship, I was also sure that the Frenchman had made a clean sweep of what they had overlooked when he pretended to search for the keys of the treasure-chests ; and this suspicion I seemed to find confirmed by the appearance of the captain's boxes. One of these boxes contained books, papers, a telescope, some nautical instruments, and the like. I looked at the books and the papers, in the hope of finding something to read ; but they were written and printed in the Spanish tongue, and might have been Hebrew for all the good they were to me.

Our life was extraordinarily dismal and melan-

choly, how much so I am unable to express. It was just the same as living in a dungeon. There was no crevice for the daylight to shine through, and had there been we must have closed it to keep the cold out. Nothing could be imagined more gloomy to the spirits than the perpetual night of the schooner's interior. The furnace, it is true, would, when it flamed heartily, throw a brightness about it ; but often it sank into redness that did but empurple the gloom. We burned but one candle at a time, and its light was very small, so that our time was spent chiefly in a sullen twilight. Added to all this was my dislike of my companion. He would half fuddle himself with liquor, and in that condition hiccup out twenty kinds of villainous yarns of piracy, murder, and bloodshed, boasting of the number of persons he had despatched, of his system of torturing prisoners to make them confess what they had concealed and where. He would drivel about his amours, of the style in which he lived when ashore, and the like ; but whether reticence had grown into a habit too strong even for drink to break down, he never once gave me so much as a hint touching his

youth and early life. He was completely a Frenchman in his vanity, and you would have thought him entirely odious and detestable for this excessive quality in him alone. Methinks I see him now, sitting before me, with one half of him reflecting the light of the furnace, his little eyes twinkling with a cruel merriment of wine, telling me a lying story of the adoration of a noble, queenly-looking captive for his person—some lovely Spanish court lady whom, with others, they had taken out of a small frigate bound to old Spain. To test her sincerity he offered to procure her liberty at the first opportunity that offered; but she wept, raved, tore her hair. No; without her Jules life would be unendurable; her husband, her country, her king, nay, even the allurements and sparkle of the court, had grown disgusting; and so on, and so on. And I think a monkey would have burst into laughter to see the bald-headed old satyr beat his bosom, flourish his arms, ogle, languish, and simper, all with a cut-throat expression, too, soften his voice, and act in short as if he was not telling me as big a lie as was ever related on shipboard.

It naturally rendered me very melancholy to reflect that I had restored this old villain to life, and I protest it was a continuous shock to such religious feelings as I had managed to preserve to reflect that what had been as good as nearly half a century of death had done nothing for this elderly rogue's morals. It entered my head once to believe that if I could succeed in getting him to believe he had lain frozen for eight-and-forty years, he might be seized with a fright (for he was a white-livered creature), and in some directions mend, and so come to a sense of the service I had done him, of which he appeared wholly insensible, and qualify me to rid my mind of the fears which I entertained concerning our association, should we manage to escape with the treasure. I said to him bluntly—not *apropos* (to use his own lingo) of anything we were talking about,—

"'Tis odd, Mr. Tassard, you should doubt my assurance that this is the year eighteen hundred and one."

He stared, grinned, and said, "Do you think so?"

"Well," said I, "perhaps it is not so odd after

all ; but you should suffer me to have as good an idea of the passage of time as yourself. You cannot tell me how long your stupor lasted."

"Two days if you like !" he interrupted vehemently. "Why more ? Why longer than a day ? How do you know that I had sunk into the condition in which you found me longer than an hour or two when you landed ? How do you know, hey ? How do you know ?" and he snapped his fingers.

"I know by the date you name and by the year that this is," said I defiantly.

He uttered a coarse French expression and added, "You want to prove that I have been insensible for forty-eight years."

"It is the fact," said I.

He looked so wild and fierce that I drew myself erect ready for him if he should fall upon me. Then, slowly wagging his head whilst the anger in his face softened out, he said, "Who reigns in France now ?"

I said, "There is no king ; he was beheaded."

"What was his name ?" said he.

"Louis the Sixteenth," I answered.

"Ha!" cried he, with an arch sneer; "Louis the Sixteenth, hey? Are you sure it wasn't Louis the Seventeenth?"

"He is dead too."

"This is news, Mr. Rodney," said he scornfully.

"Whilst you have been here," said I, "many mighty changes have happened. France has produced as great a general and as dangerous a villain as the world ever beheld; his name is Buonaparte."

He shrugged his shoulders with an air of mocking pity.

"Who is your king?" he asked.

"George the Third," said I; "God bless him!"

"So—George and Louis—Louis and George. I see how it is. Stick to your dates, sir. But, my friend, never set up as a schoolmaster."

This sally seemed to delight him, and he burst into a loud laugh.

"Eighteen hundred and one!" he cried. "A man I knew once lost ten thousand livres at a

coup. What do you think happened? They settled in him here;" he patted his belly: "he went about bragging to everybody that he was made of money, and was nicknamed the walking bourse. One day he asked a friend to dine with him; when the bill was presented he felt in his pockets, and exclaimed, 'I left my purse at home. No matter; there is plenty here;' with which he seized a table-knife and ripped himself open. Eighteen hundred and one, d'ye call it? *Soit*. But let it be *your* secret, my friend. The world will not love you for making it fifty years older than it is."

It was ridiculous to attempt to combat such obstinacy as this, and as the subject produced nothing but excitement and irritation, I dropped it and meddled with it no more, leaving him to his conviction that I was cracked in this one particular. In fact, it was a matter of no consequence at all; what came very much closer home was the business of our deliverance, and over this we talked long and very earnestly, for he forgot to be mean and fierce and boastful, and I to dislike and fear him, when we spoke of getting

away with our treasure, and returning to our native home.

For hour after hour would we go on plotting and planning and scheming, stepping about the cook-house in our earnestness, and entirely engrossed with the topic. His contention was that if we were to save the money and plate, we must save the schooner.

“Unless we build a vessel,” said I.

“Out of what?”

“Out of this schooner.”

“Are you a carpenter?” said he.

“No,” I replied.

“Neither am I,” said he. “It’s possible we might contrive such a structure as would enable us to save our lives; but we have not the skill to produce a vessel big enough to contain those chests as well as ourselves, and the stores we should require to take. Besides, do you know there is no labour more fatiguing than knocking such a craft as this to pieces?”

This I very well believed, and it was truer of such a vessel as the *Boca del Dragon* that was a perfect bed of timber, and, like the

Laughing Mary, built as if she was to keep the seas for three hundred years.

“ And supposing,” said he, “ after infinite toil we succeeded in breaking up as much of her as we wanted, what appliances have we for reshaping the curved timbers ? and where are we to lay the keel ? Labour as we might, the cold would prove too much for us. No, Mr. Rodney, to save the treasure, ay, and to save ourselves, we must save the ship. Let us put our minds to that.”

In this way we would reason, and I confess he talked very sensibly, taking very practical views, and indicating difficulties which my more ardent and imaginative nature might have been blind to till they immovably confronted me, and rendered days of labour useless. But how was the ship to be saved ? Was it possible to force Nature's hand ; in other words, to anticipate our release by the dissolution of the ice ? We were both agreed that this was the winter season in these seas, though he instantly grew sulky if I mentioned the month, for he was as certain I was as mad in this, as in the year, and he would eye me very malignantly if I persisted in calling

it July. But, as I have said, we were both agreed that the summer was to come, and though we could not swear that the ice was floating northwards, we had a right to believe so, in spite of the fierceness of the cold, this being the trick of all these frozen estates when they fetch to the heights under which we lay; and we would ask each other whether we should let our hands and minds rest idle and wait to see what the summer would do for us, or essay to launch the schooner.

“If,” said he, “we wait for the ice to break up it may break us up too.”

“Yes,” said I; “but how are we to cut the vessel out of the ice in which she is seated to above the garboard streak? Waiting is odious and intolerable work; but my own conviction is, nothing is to be done till the sun comes this way, and the ice crumbles into bergs. The island is leagues long, and vanishes in the south; but it is wasting fast in the north, and when this gale is done I shall expect to see twenty bergs where it was before all compact.”

As you may guess, our long conversations left

us without plans, bitter as was our need, and vigorous as were our efforts to strike upon some likely scheme. However, if they achieved no more, they served to beguile the time, and what was better yet, they took my companion's mind off his nauseous and revolting recollections, so that it was only now and again when he had drained a full bowl, and his little eyes danced in their thick-shagged caves, that he regaled me with his memories of murder, rapine, plank-walking, hanging, treacheries of all kinds, and cruelties too barbarous for belief.

CHAPTER II.

WE TAKE A VIEW OF THE ICE.

FOR seven days the gale raged with uncommon violence : it then broke, and this brought us into the first week of August. The wind fell in the night, and I was awakened by the silence, which you will not think strange if you consider how used were my ears to the fierce seething and strong bellowing of the blast. I lay listening, believing that it had only veered, and that it would come on again in gusts and guns ; but the stillness continued, and there was no sound whatever, saving the noises of the ice, which broke upon the air like slow answers from batteries near and distant, half whose cannons have been silenced.

I slept again, and when I awoke it was half-past nine o'clock in the morning. The Frenchman was snoring lustily. I went on deck before

entering the cook-house, and had like to have been blinded by the astonishing brilliance of the sunshine upon the ice and snow. All the wind was gone. The air was exquisitely frosty and sharp. But there was a heavy sound coming from the sea which gave me to expect the sight of a strong swell. The sky was a clear blue, and there was no cloud on as much of its face as showed betwixt the brows of the slopes.

The schooner was a most wonderful picture of drooping icicles. A more beautiful and radiant sight you could not figure. From every rope, from the yards forward, from the rails, from whatever water could run in a stream, hung glorious ice-pendants of prismatic splendour. No snow had fallen to frost the surfaces, and every pendant was as pure and polished as cut-glass and reflected a hundred brilliant colours. The water hurled over and on the schooner had frozen upon the masts, rigging, and decks, and as this ice, like the pendants, was very sparkingly bright, it gave back all the hues of the sunbeam, so that, stepping from the darkness of the cabin into this effulgent scene, you

might easily have persuaded yourself that before you stood the fabric of a ship fashioned out of a rainbow.

My attention, however, was quickly withdrawn from this shining spectacle by the appearance of the starboard cliff over against our quarter. The whole shoulder of it had broken away and I could just catch a view of the horizon of the sea from the deck by stretching my figure. The sight of the ocean showed me that the breakage had been prodigious, for to have come to that prospect before, I should have had to climb to the height of the main lower masthead. No other marked or noteworthy change did I detect from the deck ; but on stepping to the larboard side to peer over I spied a split in the ice that reached from the very margin of the ravine, I mean to that end of it where it terminated in a cliff, to past the bows of the schooner by at least four times her own length.

I returned to the cook-room and went about the old business of lighting the fire and preparing the breakfast—this job by an understanding between the Frenchman and me, falling to him who

was first out of bed—and in about twenty minutes Tassard arrived.

“The wind is gone.” said he.

“Yes,” I replied, “it is a bright still morning. I have been on deck. There has been a great fall of ice close to.”

“Does it block us?”

“No, on the contrary, it clears the way to the sea; the ocean is now visible from the deck. Not that it mends our case,” I added. “But there is a great rent in the ice that puts a fancy into my head; I’ll speak of it later after a closer look.”

The breakfast was ready, and we fell to in a hurry, the Frenchman gobbling like a hog in his eagerness to make an end. When we were finished he wrapped himself up in three or four coats and cloaks, warming the under ones before folding them about him, and completing his preparations for the excursion by swallowing half a pint of raw brandy. I bade him arm himself with a short-headed spear to save his neck; and thus equipped we went on deck.

He stood stock-still with his eyes shut on

emerging through the hatch, crying out with a number of French oaths that he had been struck blind. This I did not believe, though I readily supposed that the glare made his eyeballs smart so as to cause him a good deal of agony. Indeed, all along I had been surprised that he should have found his sight so easily after having sat in blindness for forty-eight years, and it was not wonderful that the amazing brilliance on deck, smiting his sight on a sudden, should have caused him to cry out as if he had lost the use of his eyes for ever.

I waited patiently, and in about ten minutes he was able to look about him, and then it was not long before he could see without pain. He stood a minute gazing at the glories upon the rigging, and in that piercing light I noticed the unwholesome colour of his face. His cap hid the scar, and nothing of his countenance was to be seen but the cheeks, eyes, and nose; he was much more wrinkled than I had supposed, and methought the spirit of cruelty lay visible in every line. I had never seen eyes so full of cunning and treachery—so expressive, I should say, of these qualities; yet they were no bigger than mere punc-

tures. I was sensible of a momentary fear of the man—not, let me say, an emotion of cowardice—but a sort of mixture of alarm and awe, such as a ghost might inspire. This I put down to the searching light in which I watched him for a moment or two, an irradiation subtle enough to give the sharpest form to expression, to exquisitely define every meaning that was distinguishable in his graveyard physiognomy. I left him to stare and judge for himself of the posture in which the long hard gale had put the schooner and stepped over to the two bodies. They were shrouded in ice from head to foot, as though they had each man been packed in a glass case cunningly wrought to their shapes. Their faces were hid by the crystal masks. Tassard joined me.

“Small chance for your friends now,” said I, “even if you were agreeable to my proposal to attempt to revive them.”

“So!” cried he, touching the body of the mate with his foot; “and this is the end of the irresistible Trentanove! for what conquests has Death robed him so bravely? See, the colours shine in him like fifty different kinds of ribbands. Poor

fellow! he could not curl his moustachios now, though the loveliest eyes in Europe were fixed in passionate admiration on him. He'll never slit another throat, nor hiccup Petrarch over a goblet nor remonstrate with me on my humanity. Shall we toss the bodies over the side?"

"They are your friends," said I; "do as you please."

"But we must empty their pockets first. Business before sentiment, Mr. Rodney."

He stirred the figure again with his foot.

"Well, presently," said he, "this armour will want the hatchet. Now, my friend, to view the work of the gale."

The increased heel of the ship brought the larboard fore-channel low, and we stepped without difficulty from it on to the ice. The rent or fissure that I have before spoken of went very deep; it was nearly two feet wide in places, but, though the light poured brilliantly upon it, I could see no bottom.

"If only such another split as this would happen t'other side," said the Frenchman, "I believe this block would go adrift."

“Well,” said I, after musing a little whilst I ran my eye over the hollows, “I’ll tell you what was in my mind just now. There is a great quantity of gunpowder in the hold; ten or a dozen barrels. By dropping large parcels of it into the crevices on the right there, and firing it with slow-matches—”

He interrupted me with a cry: “By St. Paul, you have it! What crevices have you?”

We walked briskly round the vessel, and all about her beam and starboard quarter I found, in addition to the seams I had before noticed, many great cracks and fissures, caused no doubt by the fall of the shoulder of the slope. I pushed on further yet, going down the ravine, as I have called it, until I came to the edge; and here I looked down from a height of some twelve or fourteen feet—so greatly had the ice sunk or been changed by the weather—upon the ocean. I called to Tassard. He approached warily. I believe he feared I might be tempted to give him a friendly shove over the edge.

“Observe this hollow,” said I; “the split there goes down to the water, and you may take it that the block is wholly disconnected on that side.

Now look at the face of the ice," said I, pointing to the starboard or right-hand side; "that crack goes as far as the vessel's quarter, and the weakness is carried on to past the bows by the other rents. Mr. Tassard, if we could burst this body of ice by an explosion from its moorings ahead of the bowsprit, where it is all too compact, this cradle with the schooner in it will go free of the parent body."

He answered promptly, "Yes; it is the one and only plan. That crack to starboard is like telling us what to do. It is well you came here. We should not have seen it from the top. This valley runs steep. You must expect no more than the surface to be liberated, for the foot of the cliff will go deep."

"I desire no more."

"Will the ship stand such a launch, supposing we bring it about?" said he.

I responded with one of his own shrugs, and said, "Nothing is certain. We have one of two courses to choose: to venture this launch, or stay till the ice breaks up, and take our chance of floating or of being smashed."

"You are right," he exclaimed. "Here is an opportunity. If we wait, bergs may gather about this point and build us in. As to this island dissolving, we are yet to know which way 'tis heading. Suppose it should be travelling south, hey!"

He struck the ice with his spear, and we toiled up the slippery rocks with difficulty to the ship. We walked past the bows to the distance of the vessel's length. Here were many deep holes and cracks, and as if we were to be taught how these came about, even whilst we were viewing them an ear-splitting crash of noise happened within twenty fathoms of us, a rock many tons in weight rolled over, and left a black gulf behind it.

The Frenchman started, muttered, and crossed himself. "Holy Virgin!" he cried, rolling his eyes. "Let us return to the schooner. We shall be swallowed up here."

I own I was not a little terrified myself by the sudden loud blast and the thunder of the uprooted rock, and the sight of the huge black rent; but I meant to view the scene from the top, and to consider how best to dispose of the powder in the

cracks, and said, "There is nothing to be done on board; skulking below will not deliver us or preserve the treasure. Here are several fissures big enough to receive barrels of gunpowder." See, Mr. Tassard, as they stand they cover the whole width of the hollow."

And I proceeded to give him my ideas as to lowering, fixing the barrels, and the like. He nodded his head, and said, "Yes, very good; yes, it will do," and so on; but was too scared in his heart, I believe, to see my full meaning. He was perpetually moving, as if he feared the ice would split under his feet, and his eyes travelled over the face of the rocks with every manifestation of alarm in their expression. I wondered how so poor a creature should ever have had stomach enough to serve as a pirate; no doubt his spirit had been enfeebled by his long sleep; but then it is also true that the greatest bullies and most bloodthirsty rogues prove themselves despicable curs under conditions which make no demand upon their temper or their lust for plunder.

He would have returned to the ship, had I encouraged him, but on seeing me start to climb to

the brow he followed. The prospect disappointed me. I had expected to witness a variety of surprising changes; but southward the scene was scarce altered. It was a wonderfully fair morning, the sky clear from sea-line to sea-line, and of a very soft blue, the ocean of a like hue, with a high swell running, that was a majestic undulation even from the height at which I surveyed it. The sun stood over the ice in the north-east, and the dazzle kept me weeping, so intolerable was the effulgence. Half of the delicate architecture that had enriched the slopes and surfaces that way was swept down, and ice lay piled in places to an elevation of many feet, where before it had been flat or hollow. However, there was no question but that the gale had played havoc with the north extremity of the island: I counted no less than twenty bergs floating off the main, and it was quite likely the sea was crowded beyond, though my sight could not travel so far.

However, when I came to look close, and to recollect the features of the shore as they showed when I first landed, I found some vital changes near at hand. Where my haven had been the ice

had given way and left a gap half a mile broad and a hundred feet deep. The fall on the schooner's starboard quarter was very heavy, and the ice was split in all directions; and in parts was so loose that a point of cliff hard upon the sea rocked with the swell. When Tassard came to a stand he looked about him north and south, shading his eyes with his hand, and then swearing very savagely in French, he cried out in English, freely employing oaths as he spoke,—

“Why, here's as much ice as there was before I fell asleep! See yonder!” pointing to the south. “It dies out in the distance. If it does not join the pole there, may the devil rise before me as I speak. Thunder and fury! I had hoped to see it shrivelled to an ordinary berg!”

“What! in a week?” cried I, as if I believed his stupor had not lasted longer.

He returned no answer and gaped about him full of consternation and passion.

“And are we to wait for our deliverance till this continent breaks up?” he bawled. “The day of judgment will be a thing of the past by that time. Travelling north! 'sdeath!” he roared, his mouth

full of the expletives of his day, French and English. "Who but a madman could suppose that this ice is not as fixed as the antarctic circle to which it is moored? Why, six months ago it was no bigger than it is now!" And he sent a furious terrified gaze into the white solitudes vanishing in azure faintness in the southwest.

It was not a thing to reason upon. I was as much disappointed as he by the trifling changes the gale had made, and my heart felt very heavy at the sight of the great field disappearing in the south. The bergs in the north signified little. It is true they indicated demolition, but demolition so slow as to be worthless to us. It was not to be questioned that the island was proceeding north, but at what rate? Here, perhaps, might be a frozen crescent of forty or fifty leagues: and at what speed, appreciable enough to be of the least consequence to our calculations, should such a body travel?

I looked at the Frenchman.

"This must decide us!" said I. "We must fix on one of two courses: endeavour to launch

the ship by blowing up the ice, or turn to and rig up the best arrangement we can contrive and put to sea."

"Yes," he answered, scowling as he darted his enraged eyes over the ice. "Better set a slow-match in the magazine and drink ourselves senseless, and so blow ourselves to hell, than linger here in the hope that this continent will dissolve and release us. Where's Mendoza's body?"

I stared about me, and then pointing to the huge gap the ice had made, answered, "It was there. Where it is now I know not."

He shrugged his shoulders, took another view of the ice and the ocean, and then cried impatiently, "Let us return! the powder-barrels must have the first chance." And he made for the schooner, savagely striking the ice with his spear and growling curses to himself as he ploughed and climbed and jumped his way along.

CHAPTER III.

A MERRY EVENING.

By the time we had reached the bottom of the hollow Tassard was blowing like a bellows with the uncommon exertion ; and swearing that he felt the cold penetrating his bones, and that he should be stupefied again if he did not mind, he climbed into the ship and disappeared. I loved him so little that secretly I very heartily wished that nature would make away with him : I mean that something it would be impossible in me to lay to my conscience should befall him, as becoming comatose again, and so lying like one dead. Assuredly in such a case it was not this hand that would have wasted a drop of brandy in returning an evil, white-livered, hectoring old rascal to a life that smelled foully with him and the like of him.

It was so still a day that the cold did not try

me sorely : there was vitality if not warmth in the light of the sun, and I was heated with clambering. So I stayed a full half-hour after my companion had vanished examining the ice about the schooner ; which careful inspection repaid me to the extent of giving me to see that if by blasts of gunpowder I could succeed in rupturing the ice ahead of the schooner's bows there was a very good chance of the mass on which she lay going adrift. Yet I will not deny that though I recognized this business of dislocation as our only chance—for I could see little or nothing to be done in the way of building a boat proper to swim and ply—I foreboded a dismal issue to our adventure, even should we succeed in separating this block from the main. In fine, what I feared was that the weight of the schooner would upset the ice and drown her and us.

I entered the ship and found Tassard roasting himself in the cook-house.

“ How melancholy is this gloom,” said I, “ after the glorious white sunshine ! ”

“ Yes,” said he, “ but it is warm. That is enough for me. Curse the cold, say I. It robs a

man of all spirit. To grapple with this rigour one should have fed all one's life on blubber. I defy a man to be brave when he is half-frozen. I feel a match for any three men now ; but on the heights a flea would have made me run."

He pulled a pot from the bricks and filled his pannikin.

"I have been surveying the ice," said I, drawing to the furnace, "and have very little doubt that if we wisely bestow the powder in great quantities we shall succeed in dislocating the bed on which we are lying."

"Good!" he cried.

"But after?" said I.

"What?"

"As much of this bed as may be dislodged will not be deep: icebergs, as of course you know, capsize in consequence of their becoming top-heavy by the wasting of the bulk that is submerged. This block will make but a small berg should we liberate it, and I very much fear that the weight of the schooner will upset it the instant we are launched."

"Body of Moses!" he cried angrily, knitting

his brows, whereby he stretched the scar to half its usual width, "what's to be done, then?"

"She is a full ship," said I, "and weighty. If the liberated ice be thin she may sit up on it and keep it under. We have a right to hope in that direction, perhaps. Yet there is another consideration. She may leak like a sieve!"

"Why?" he exclaimed. "She took the ice smoothly; she has not been strained; she was as tight as a bottle before she stranded; the coating of ice will have cherished her; and a stout ship like this does not suffer from six months of lying up!"

Six months, thought I!

"Well, it may be as you say; but if she leaks it will not be in our four arms to keep her free."

He exclaimed hotly, "Mr. Rodney, if we are to escape, we must venture something. To stay here means death in the end. I am persuaded that this ice is joined with some vast main body far south and that it does not move. What is there, then, to wait for? There is promise in your gunpowder proposal. If she capsizes then the devil will get his own." And with a savage

flourish of the pannikin he put it to his lips and drained it.

His sullen determination that we should stand or fall by my scheme was not very useful to me. I had looked for some shrewdness in him, some capacity of originating and weighing ideas ; but I found he could do little more than curse and swagger and ply his can, in which he found most of his anecdotes and recollections and not a little of his courage. I pulled out my watch, as I must call it, and observed that it was hard upon one o'clock.

" 'Tis lucky," said he, eying the watch greedily and coming to it away from the great subject of our deliverance as though the sight of the fine gold thing with its jewelled letter extinguished every other thought in him, " that you removed that watch from Mendoza. But he will have carried other good things to the bottom with him, I fear."

" His flask and tobacco-box I took away," said I. " He had nothing of consequence besides."

" They must go into the common-chest," cried he ; " 'tis share and share, you know."

" Ay," said I, " but what I found on Mendoza

is mine by the highest right under heaven. If I had not taken the things, they would now be at the bottom of the sea."

"What of that?" cried he savagely. "If we had not plundered the galleon, she might have been wrecked and taken all she had down with her. Yet should such a consideration hinder a fair division as between us—between you who had nothing to do with the pillage and me who risked my life in it?"

I said, "Very well ; be it as you say," appearing to consent, for there was something truly absurd in an altercation about a few guineas' worth of booty in the face of our melancholy and most perilous situation ; though it not only enabled me to send a deeper glance into the mind of this man than I had yet been able to manage, but made me understand a reason for the bloody and furious quarrels which have again and again arisen among persons standing on the brink of eternity, to whom a cup of drink or the sight of a ship had been more precious than the contents of the Bank of England.

I set about getting the dinner.

“Whilst you are at that work,” cried he, starting up, “I’ll overhaul the pockets of the bodies on deck;” and, picking up a chopper, away he went, and I heard him cursing in his native tongue as he stumbled to the companion-ladder through the darkness in the cabin.

His rapacity was beyond credence. There was an immense treasure in the hold, yet he could not leave the pockets of the two poor wretches on deck alone. I did not envy him his task. The frozen figures would bear a deal of hammering; and besides he had to work in the cold. Ah, thought I with a groan, I should have left him to make one of them!

I had finished my dinner by the time he arrived. He produced the watch I had taken from and returned to the mate’s pocket when I had searched him for a tinder-box; also a gold snuff-box set with diamonds, and a few Spanish pieces in gold. On seeing these things I remembered that I had found some rings and money in his pockets whilst overhauling him for means to obtain fire; but I held my peace.

“Should not we have been imbeciles to sacrifice

these beauties ? ” he cried, viewing the watch and snuff-box with a rapturous grin.

“ They were hard to come at, I expect ? ”

“ No,” he answered, pocketing them and turning to a piece of beef in the oven. “ I knocked away the ice and after a little wrenching got at the pockets. But poor Trentanove ! d’ye know, his nose came away with the mask of ice ! He is no longer lovely to the sight ! ” He broke into a guffaw, then stuffed his mouth full and talked in the intervals of chewing. “ There was nothing worth taking on Barros. They are both overboard.”

“ Overboard ! ” I cried.

“ Why, yes,” said he. “ They are no good on deck. I stood them against the rail, then tipped them over.”

This was an illustration of his strength I did not much relish.

“ I doubt if I could have lifted Barros,” said I.

“ Not you ! ” he exclaimed, running his eye over me. “ A dead Dutchman would have the weight of a fairy alongside Barros.”

“ Well, Mr. Tassard,” said I, “ since you are so

strong, you will be very useful to our scheme. There is much to be done."

"Give me a sketch of your plans, that I may understand you," he exclaimed, continuing to eat very heartily.

"First of all," said I, "we shall have to break the powder-barrels out of the magazine and hoist them on deck. There are tackles, I suppose?"

"You should be able to find what you want among the boatswain's stores in the run," he replied.

"There are some splits wide enough to receive a whole barrel of powder," said I. "I counted four such yawns all happily lying in a line athwart the ice past the bows. I propose to sink these barrels twenty feet deep, where they must hang from a piece of spar across the aperture."

He nodded.

"Have you any slow matches aboard?"

"Plenty among the gunner's stores," he replied.

"There are but you and me," said I; "these operations will take time. We must mind not to be blown up by one barrel whilst we are suspending another. We shall have to lower the barrels

with their matches on fire and they must be timed to burn an hour.

"Ay, certainly, at least an hour," he exclaimed. "Two hours would be better."

"Well, that must depend upon the number of parcels of matches we meet with. There will be a good many mines to spring, and one must not explode before another. 'Tis the united force of the several blasts which we must reckon on. The contents of at least four more barrels of powder we must distribute amongst the other chinks and splits in such parcels as they will be able to receive."

"And then?"

"And then," said I, "we must await the explosion and trust to the mercy of Heaven to help us."

He made a hideous face, as if this was a sort of talk to nauseate him, and said, "Do you propose that we should remain on board or watch the effects from a distance?"

"Why, remain on board of course," I answered. "Suppose the mines liberated the ice on which the schooner lies and it floated away, what should we, watching at a distance, do?"

"True," cried he, "but it is cursed perilous. The explosion might blow the ship up."

"No, it will not do that. We shall be bad engineers if we bring such a thing about. The danger will be—providing the schooner is released—in her capsizing, as I have before pointed out."

"Enough!" cried he, charging his pannikin for the third time. "We must chance her capsizing."

"If I had a crew at my back," said I, "I would carry an anchor and cable to the shoulder of the cliff at the end of the slope to hold the ship, if she swam. I would also put a quantity of provisions on the ice along with materials for making us shelter and the whole of the stock of coal, so that we could go on supporting life here if the schooner capsized."

"Then," said he, "you would remain ashore during the explosion?"

"Most certainly. But as all these preparations would mean a degree of labour impracticable by us two men, I am for the bold venture—prepare and fire the mines, return to the ship, and leave the rest to Providence."

He made another ugly face and indulged himself in a piece of profanity that was inexpressibly disgusting and mean in the mouth of a man who was used to cross himself when alarmed and swear by the saints. But perhaps he knew, even better than I, how little he had to expect from Providence. He filled his pipe, exclaiming that when he had smoked it out we should fall to work.

Now that I had settled a plan I was eager to put it into practice—hot and wild indeed with the impatience and hope of the castaway animated with the dream of recovering his liberty and preserving his life; and I was the more anxious to set about the business at once; on account of the weather being fair and still, for if it came on to blow a stormy wind again we should be forced as before under hatches. But I had to wait for the Frenchman to empty his pipe. He was so complete a sensualist that I believe nothing short of terror could have forced him to shorten the period of a pleasure by a second of time. He went on puffing so deliberately, with such leisurely enjoyment of the flavour of the smoke, that I expected

to see him fall asleep ; and my patience becoming exhausted I jumped up ; but by this time his bowl held nothing but black ashes.

“ Now,” cried he, “ to work.”

And he rose with a prodigious yawn and seized the lanthorn. Our first business was to hunt among the boatswain's stores in the run for tackles to hoist the powder-barrels up with. There was a good collection, as might have been expected in a pirate whose commerce lay in slinging goods from other ships' holds into her own ; but the ropes were frozen as hard as iron, to remedy which we carried an armful to the cook-house, and left the tackles to lie and soften. We also conveyed to the cook-house a quantity of ratline stuff—a thin rope used for making of the steps in the shroud ladders ; this being a line that would exactly serve to suspend the smaller parcels of powder in the splits. Before touching the powder-barrels we put a lighted candle into the bull's-eye lamp over the door and removed the lanthorn to a safe distance. Tassard was perfectly well acquainted with the contents of this storeroom, and on my asking for the matches put his hand on one of

several bags of them. They varied in length, some being six inches and some making a big coil. There was nothing for it but to sample and test them, and this I told Tassard could be done that evening. The main hatch was just forward of the gun-room bulkhead ; we seized a handspike apiece and went to work to prize the cover open. It was desperate tough labour ; as bad as trying to open an oyster with a soft blade. The Frenchman broke out into many strange old-fashioned oaths in his own tongue, imagining the hatch to be frozen ; but though I don't doubt the frost had something to do with it, its obstinacy was mainly owing to time, that had soldered it, so to speak, with the stubbornness that eight-and-forty years will communicate to a fixture which ice has cherished and kept sound.

We got the hatch open at last—be pleased to know that I am speaking of the hatch in the lower deck, for there was another immediately over it on the upper or main deck—and returning to the powder-room rolled the barrels forward ready for slinging and hoisting away when we should have rigged a tackle aloft. We had not

done much, but what we had done had eaten far into the afternoon.

“I am tired and hungry and thirsty,” said the Frenchman. “Let us knock off. We have made good progress. No use opening the main-deck hatch to-night: the vessel is cold enough even when hermetically corked.”

“Very well,” said I, bringing my watch to the lanthorn and observing the time to be sundown: so, carefully extinguishing the candle in the bull’s-eye lamp, we took each of us a bag of matches and went to the cook-room.

There was neither tea nor coffee in the ship. I so pined for these soothing drinks that I would have given all the wine in the vessel for a few pounds of either one of them. A senseless, ungracious yearning, indeed, in the face of the plenty that was aboard! but it was the plenty, perhaps, that provoked it. There was chocolate, which the Frenchman frothed and drank with hearty enjoyment; he also devoured handfuls of *succades*, which he would wash down with wine. These things made me sick, and for drink I was forced upon the spirits and wine, the latter of which was

so generous that it promised to combine with the enforced laziness of my life under hatches to make me fat ; so that I am of opinion had we waited for the ice to release us, I should have become so corpulent as to prove a burden to myself.

I mention this here that you may find an excuse in it for the only act of folly in the way of drinking that I can lay to my account whilst I was in this pirate ; for I must tell you that, on returning to the furnace, we, to refresh us after our labour, made a bowl of punch, of which I drank so plentifully that I began to feel myself very merry. I forgot all about the matches and my resolution to test them that night. The Frenchman, enjoying my condition, continued to pledge me till his little eyes danced in his head. Luckily for me, being at bottom of a very jolly disposition, drink never served me worse than to develop that quality in me. No man could ever say that I was quarrelsome in my cups. My progress was marked by stupid smiles, terminating in unmeaning laughter. The Frenchman sang a ballad about love and Picardy, and the like, and I gave him "Hearts of Oak," the sentiments of which song kept him

shrugging his shoulders and drunkenly looking contempt.

We continued singing alternately for some time, until he fell to setting up his throat when I was at work, and this confused and stopped me. He then favoured me with what he called the Pirate's Dance, a very wild, grotesque movement, with no elegance whatever to be hurt by his being in liquor; and I think I see him now, whipping off his coat, and sprawling and flapping about in high boots and a red waistcoat, flourishing his arms, snapping his fingers, and now and again bursting into a stave to keep step to. When he was done, I took the floor with the hornpipe, whistling the air, and double-shuffling, toe-and-heeling, and quivering from one leg to another very briskly. He lay back against the bulkhead grasping a can half full of punch, roaring loudly at my antics; and when I sank down, breathless, would have had me go on, hiccuping that though he had known scores of English sailors, he had never seen that dance better performed.

By this time I was extremely excited and

extraordinarily merry, and losing hold of my judgment, began to indulge in sundry pleasantries concerning his nation and countrymen, asking with many explosions of laughter, how it was that they continued at the trouble of building ships for us to use against them, and if he did not think the "flower de louse" a neater symbol for people who put snuff into their soup and restricted their ablutions to their faces than the tricolour, being too muddled to consider that he was ignorant of that flag; and in short I was so offensive, in spite of my ridiculous merriment, that his savage nature broke out. He assailed the English with every injurious term his drunken condition suffered him to recollect; and starting up with his little eyes wildly rolling, he clapped his hand to his side, as if feeling for a sword, and calling me by a very ugly French word, bade me come on, and he would show me the difference between a Frenchman and a beast of an Englishman.

I laughed at him with all my might, which so enraged him that, swaying to right and left, he advanced as if to fall upon me. I started to my

feet and tumbled over the bench I had jumped from, and lay sprawling; and the bench over-setting close to him, he kicked against it and fell too, fetching the deck a very hard blow. He groaned heavily and muttered that he was killed. I tried to rise, but my legs gave way, and then the fumes of the punch overpowered me, for I recollect no more.

When I awoke it was pitch dark. My hands, legs, and feet seemed formed of ice, my head of burning brass. I thought I was in my cot, and felt with my hands till I touched Tassard's cold bald head, which so terrified me that I uttered a loud cry and sprang erect. Then recollection returned, and I heartily cursed myself for my folly and wickedness. Good God! thought I, that I should be so mad as to drown my senses when never was any wretch in such need of all his reason as I!

The boatswain's tinder-box was in my pocket; I groped, found a candle, and lighted it. It was twenty minutes after three in the morning. Tassard lay on his back, snoring hideously, his legs overhanging the capsized bench. I pulled and

hauled at him, but he was too drunk to awake, and that he might not freeze to death I fetched a pile of clothes out of his cabin and covered him up, and put his head on a coat.

My head ached horribly, but not worse than my heart. When I considered how our orgy might have ended in bloodshed and murder, how I had insulted God's providence by drinking and laughing and roaring out songs and dancing at a time when I most needed His protection, with Death standing close beside me, as I may say, I could have beaten my head against the deck in the anguish of my contrition and shame. My passion of sorrow was so extravagant, indeed, that I remember looking at the Frenchman as if he was the devil incarnate, who had put himself in my way to thaw and recover, that he might tempt me on to the loss of my soul. Fortunately these fancies did not last. I was parched with thirst, but the water was ice, and there was no fire to melt it with; so I broke off some chips and sucked them, and held a lump to my forehead. I went to my cabin and got into my hammock, but my head was so hot, and ached

so furiously, and I was so vexed with myself besides, that I could not sleep. The schooner was deathly still; there was not apparently the faintest murmur of air to awaken an echo in her; nothing spoke but the near and distant cracking of the ice. It was miserable work lying in the cabin sleepless and reproaching myself, and as my burning head robbed the cold of its formidableness, I resolved to go on deck and take a brisk turn or two.

The night was wonderfully fine; the velvet dusk so crowded with stars that in parts it resembled great spaces of cloth of silver hovering. I turned my eyes northwards to the stars low down there and thought of England and the home where I was brought up until the tears gathered, and with them went something of the dreadful burning aching out of my head. Those distant, silent, shining bodies amazingly intensified the sense of my loneliness and remoteness, and yonder Southern Cross and the luminous dust of the Magellanic clouds seemed not farther off than my native country. It is not in language to express the savage naked beauty, the wild mystery of the

white still scene of ice, shining back to the stars with a light that owed nothing to their glory; nor convey how the whole was heightened to every sense by the element of fear, put into the picture by the sounds of the splitting ice, and the softened regular roaring of the breakers along the coast.

I started with fresh shame and horror when I contrasted this ghastly calmness of pale ice and the brightness of the holy stars looking down upon it, with our swinish revelry in the cabin, and I thought with loathing of the drunken ribaldry of the pirate and my own tipsy songs piercing the ear of the mighty spirit of this solitude. The exercise improved my spirits; I stepped the length of the little raised deck briskly, my thoughts very busy. On a sudden the ice split on the starboard hand with a noise louder than the explosion of a twenty-four pounder. The schooner swayed to a level keel with so sharp a rise that I lost my balance and staggered. I recovered myself, trembling and greatly agitated by the noise and the movement coming together, without the least hint having been given me, and grasping a backstay, waited, not knowing what was to happen

next. Unless it be the heave of an earthquake, I can imagine no motion capable of giving one such a swooning, nauseating, terrifying sensation as the rending of ice under a fixed ship. In a few moments there were several sharp cracks, all on the starboard side, like a snapping of musketry, and I felt the schooner very faintly heave, but this might have been a deception of the senses, for though I set a star against the masthead and watched it, there was no movement. I looked over the side and observed that the split I had noticed on the face of the cliff had by this new rupture been extended transversely right across the schooner's starboard bow, the thither side being several feet higher than on this. It was plain that the bed on which the vessel rested had dropped so as to bring her upright, and I was convinced by this circumstance alone, that if I used good judgment in disposing of the powder the weight of the mass would complete its own dislocation.

I stepped a little way forward to obtain a clearer sight of the splits about the schooner, and on putting my head over, I was inexpressibly

dismayed and confounded by the apparition of a man with his arms stretched out before him, his face upturned, and his posture that of starting back as though terrified at beholding me. I had met with several frights whilst I had been on this island, but none worse than this, none that so completely paralyzed me as to very nearly deprive me of the power of breathing. I stared at him, and he seemed to stare at me, and I know not which of the two was the more motionless. The whiteness made a light of its own, and he was perfectly plain. I blinked and puffed, conceiving it might be some illusion of the wine I had drunk, and finding him still there, and acting as though he warded me off in terror, as if my showing myself unawares had led him to think me the devil—I say finding him perfectly real, I was seized with an agony of fear, and should have rushed to my cabin had my legs been equal to the task of transporting me there. *Then*, thought I, idiot that you are, what think you, you fool, is it but the body of Trentanove? Sure enough it was, and putting my head a little farther over the rail, I saw the figure of the Portuguese

Barros lying close under the bends. No doubt it was the movement of the ice that had shot the Italian into the life-like posture, it being incredible he should have fallen so on being tumbled overboard by the Frenchman. But there he was, resting against a lump of ice, looking as living in his frozen posture as ever he had showed in the cabin.

The shock did my head good; I went below and got into my cot, and after tossing for half an hour or so fell asleep. I awoke and went to the cook-house, where I found Tassard preparing the breakfast, and a great fire burning. I hardly knew what reception he would give me, and was therefore not a little agreeably surprised by his thanking me for covering him up.

"You have a stronger head than mine," said he. "The punch used you well. You made me laugh, though. You was very diverting."

"Ay, much too diverting to please myself," said I; and I sounded him cautiously to remark what his memory carried of my insults, but found that he recollected nothing more than that I danced with vigour, and sang well.

I said nothing about my contrition, my going on

deck, and the like, contenting myself with asking if he had heard the explosion in the night.

"No," cried he, staring and looking eagerly.

"Well, then," said I, "there has happened a mighty crack in the ice, and I do soberly believe that with the blessing of God we shall be able by blasts of powder to free the block on which the schooner rests."

"Good!" cried he; "come, let us hurry with this meal. How is the weather?"

"Quiet, I believe. I have not been on deck since the explosion aroused me early this morning."

Whilst we ate he said, "Suppose we get the schooner afloat, what do you propose?"

"Why," I answered, "if she prove tight and seaworthy, what but carry her home?"

"What, you and I alone?"

"No," said I, "certainly not; we must make shift to sail her to the nearest port, and ship a crew."

He looked at me attentively, and said, "What do you mean by home?"

"England," said I.

He shrugged his shoulders and exclaimed in French, "'Tis natural." Then proceeding in English, "Pray," said he, showing his fangs, "do not you know that the *Boca del Dragon* is a pirate? Do you want to be hanged that you propose to carry her to a port to ship men?"

"I have no fear of that," said I; "after all these years she'll be as clean forgotten as if she had never had existence."

"Look ye here, Mr. Rodney," cried he in a passion, "let's have no more of this snivelling nonsense about *years*. You may be as mad as you please on that point, but it shan't hang *me*. It needs more than a few months to make men forget a craft that has carried on such traffic as our hold represents. You'll not find me venturing myself nor the schooner into any of your ports for men. No, no, my friend. I am in no stupor now, you know; and I've slept the punch off also, d'ye see. What, betray our treasure and be hanged for our generosity?"

He made me an ironical bow, grinning with wrath.

"Let's get the schooner afloat first," said I.

"Ay, that's all very well," he cried; "but better stop here than dangle in chains. No, my friend; our plan must be a very different one from your proposal. I suppose you want your share of the booty?" said he, snapping his fingers.

"I deserve it," said I, smiling, that I might soften his passion.

"And yet you would convey the most noted pirate of the age, with plunder in her to the value of thousands of doubloons, to a port in which we should doubtless find ships of war, a garrison, magistrates, governors, prisons, and the whole of the machinery it is our business to give our stern to! *Ma foi*, Mr. Rodney! sure you are out in something more than your reckoning of time?"

"What do you propose?" said I.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, whilst his little eyes twinkled with cunning, "now you speak sensibly. What do I propose? This, my friend. We must navigate the schooner to an island and bury the treasure; then head for the shipping highways. and obtain help from any friendly merchantmen we may fall in with. *Home* with us means the Tortugas. There we shall find the company we

need to recover for us what we shall have hidden. We shall come by our own then. But to sail with this treasure on board—without a crew to defend the vessel—by this hand! the first cruiser that sighted us would make a clean sweep, and then, ho, for the hangman, Mr. Rodney!”

How much I relished this scheme you will imagine; but to reason with him would have been mere madness. I knitted my brows and seemed to reflect, and then said, “Well, there is a great deal of plain, good sense in what you say. I certainly see the wisdom of your advice in recommending that we should bury the treasure. Nor must we leave anything on board to convict the ship of her true character.”

His greedy eyes sparkled with self-complacency. He tapped his forehead and cried, “Trust to this. There is mind behind this surface. Your plan for releasing the schooner is great; mine for preserving the treasure is great too. You are the sailor, I the strategist; by combining our genius, we shall oppose an invulnerable front to adversity, and must end our days as Princes. Your hand, Paul!”

I laughed and gave him my hand, which he squeezed with many contortions of face and figure ; but though I laughed I don't know that I ever so much disliked and distrusted and feared the old leering rogue as at that moment.

"Come !" cried I, jumping up, "let's get about our work." And with that I pulled open a bag of matches, and fell to testing them. They burnt well. The fire ate into them as smoothly as if they had been prepared the day before. They were all of one thickness. I cut them to equal lengths, and fired them and waited watch in hand ; one was burnt out two minutes before the other, and each length took about ten minutes to consume. This was good enough to base my calculations upon.

CHAPTER IV.

WE EXPLODE THE MINES.

I DON'T design to weary you with a close account of our proceedings. How we opened the main-deck hatch, rigged up tackles, clapping purchases on to the falls, as the capstan was hard frozen and immovable ; how we hoisted the powder-barrels on deck and then, by tackles on the foreyard, lowered them over the side ; how we filled a number of bags which we found in the forecastle with powder ; how we measured the cracks in the ice and sawed a couple of spare studding-sail booms into lengths to serve as beams whereby to poise the barrels and bags ; would make but sailor's talk, half of which would be unintelligible and the rest wearisome.

The Frenchman worked hard, and we snatched only half an hour for our dinner. The split that had happened in the ice during the night showed

by daylight as a gulf betwixt eight and ten feet wide at the seawards end, thinning to a width of three feet, never less, to where it ended, ahead of the ship, in a hundred cracks in the ice that showed as if a thunderbolt had fallen just there. I looked into this rent, but it was as black as a well past a certain depth, and there was no gleam of water. When we went over the side to roll our first barrel of powder to the spot where we meant to lower it, the Frenchman marched up to the figure of Trentanove, and with no more reverence than a boy would show in throwing a stone at a jackass, tumbled him into the chasm. He then stepped up to the body of the Portuguese boatswain, dragged him to the same fissure, and rolled him into it.

“There!” cried he; “now they are properly buried.”

And with this he went coolly on with his work.

I said nothing, but was secretly heartily disgusted with this brutal disposal of his miserable shipmates' remains. However, it was his doing, not mine; and I confess the removal of those silent witnesses

was a very great relief to me, albeit when I considered how Tassard had been awakened, and how both the mate and the boatswain might have been brought to by treatment, I felt as though, after a manner, the Frenchman had committed a murder by burying them so.

It blew a small breeze all day from the southwest, the weather keeping fine. It was ten o'clock in the morning when we started on our labour, and the sun had been sunk a few minutes by the time we had rigged the last whip for the lowering and poisoning of the powder. This left us nothing to do in the morning but light the matches, lower the powder into position, and then withdraw to the schooner and await the issue. Our arrangements comprised, first, four barrels of powder in deep yawns ahead of the vessel, directly athwart the line of her head; second, two barrels, a wide space between them, in the great chasm on the starboard side; third, about fifty very heavy charges in bags and the like for the further rupturing of many splits and crevices on the larboard bow of the ship, where the ice was most compact. What should follow the mighty blast

no mortal being could have foretold. I had no fear of the charges injuring the vessel—that is to say, I did not fear that the actual explosion would damage her: but as the effect of the bursting of such a mass of powder as we designed to explode upon so brittle a substance as ice was not calculable, it was quite likely that the vast discharge, instead of loosening and freeing the bed of ice, might rend it into blocks, and leave the schooner still stranded and lying in some wild posture amid the ruins.

But the powder was our only trumps; we had but to play it and leave the rest to fortune.

We got our supper and sat smoking and discussing our situation and chances. Tassard was tired, and this and our contemplation of the probabilities of the morrow sobered his mind, and he talked with a certain gravity. He drank sparingly and forbore the hideous recollections or inventions he was used to bestow on me, and indeed could find nothing to talk about but the explosion and what it was to do for us. I was very glad he did not again refer to his project to bury the treasure and carry the schooner to the Tortugas. The

subject fired his blood, and it was such nonsense that the mere naming of it was nauseous to me. Eight-and-forty years had passed since his ship fell in with this ice, and not tenfold the treasure in the hold might have purchased for him the sight of so much as a single bone of the youngest of those associates whom he idly dreamt of seeking and shipping and sailing in command of. Yet, imbecile as was his scheme, having regard to the half-century that had elapsed, I clearly witnessed the menace to me that it implied. His views were to be read as plainly as if he had delivered them. First and foremost he meant that I should help him to sail the schooner to an island and bury the plate and money; which done he would take the first opportunity to murder me. His chance of meeting with a ship that would lend him assistance to navigate the schooner would be as good if he were alone in her as if I were on board too. There would be nothing, then, in this consideration to hinder him from cutting my throat after we had buried the treasure and were got north. Two motives would imperatively urge him to make away with me; first, that I should not be able to

serve as a witness to his being a pirate, and next that he alone should possess the secret of the treasure.

He little knew what was passing in my mind as he surveyed me through the curls of smoke spouting up from his death's-head pipe. I talked easily and confidentially, but I saw in his gaze the eyes of my murderer, and was so sure of his intentions that had I shot him in self-defence, as he sat there, I am certain my conscience would have acquitted me of his blood.

I passed two most uneasy hours in my cot before closing my eyes. I could think of nothing but how to secure myself against the Frenchman's treachery. You would suppose that my mind must have been engrossed with considerations of the several possibilities of the morrow; but that was not so. My reflections ran wholly to the bald-headed evil-eyed pirate whom in an evil hour I had thawed into being, and who was like to discharge the debt of his own life by taking mine. The truth is, I had been too hard at work all day, too full of the business of planning, cutting, testing, and contriving, to find leisure to dwell upon what

he had said at breakfast, and now that I lay alone in darkness it was the only subject I could settle my thoughts to.

However, next morning I found myself less gloomy, thanks to several hours of solid sleep. I thought, what is the good of anticipating? Suppose the schooner is crushed by the ice or jammed by the explosion? Until we are under way, nay, until the treasure is buried, I have nothing to fear, for the rogue cannot do without me. And, reassuring myself in this fashion, I went to the cook-room and lighted the fire; my companion presently arrived, and we sat down to our morning meal.

"I dreamt last night," said he, "that the devil sat on my breast and told me that we should break clear of the ice and come off safe with the treasure—there is loyalty in the Fiend. He seldom betrays his friends."

"You have a better opinion of him than I," said I; "and I do not know that you have much claim upon his loyalty either, seeing that you will cross yourself and call upon the Madonna and saints when the occasion arises."

“Pooh, mere habit,” cried he, sarcastically. “I have seen Barros praying to a little wooden saint in a gale of wind and then knock its head off and throw it overboard because the storm increased.” And here he fell to talking very impiously, professing such an outrageous contempt for every form of religion, and affirming so ardent a belief in the goodwill of Satan and the like, that I quitted my bench at last in a passion, and told him that he must be the devil himself to talk so, and that for my part his sentiments awoke in me nothing but the utmost scorn, loathing, and horror of him.

His face fell, and he looked at me with the eye of one who takes measure of another and does not feel sure.

“Tut!” cried he, with a feigned peevishness; “what are my sentiments to you, or yours to me? you may be a Quaker for all I care. Come, fill your pannikin and let us drink a health to our own souls!”

But though he said this grinning, he shot a savage look of malice at me, and when he put his pannikin down his face was very clouded and sulky.

We finished our meal in silence, and then I rose, saying, "Let us now see what the gunpowder is going to do for us."

My rising and saying this worked a change in him. He exclaimed briskly, "Ay, now for the great experiment," and made for the companion-steps with an air of bustle.

The wind as before was in the south-west, blowing without much weight; but the sky was overcast with great masses of white clouds with a tint of rainbows in their shoulders and skirts, amid which the sky showed in a clear liquid blue. Those clouds seemed to promise wind and perhaps snow anon; but there was nothing to hinder our operations. We got upon the ice, and went to work to fix matches to the barrels and bags, and to sling them by the beams we had contrived ready for lowering when the matches were fired, and this occupied us the best part of two hours. When all was ready I fired the first match, and we lowered the barrel smartly to the scope of line we had settled upon; so with the others. You may reckon we worked with all imaginable wariness, for the stuff we handled was mighty deadly,

and if a barrel should fall and burst with the match alight, we might be blown in an instant into rags, it being impossible to tell how deep the rents went.

The bags being lighter there was less to fear, and presently all the barrels and bags with the matches burning were poised in the places and hanging at the depth we had fixed upon, and we then returned to the schooner, the Frenchman breaking into a run and tumbling over the rail in his alarm with the dexterity of a monkey.

Each match was supposed to burn an hour, so that when the several explosions happened they might all occur as nearly as possible at once, and we had therefore a long time to wait. The margin may look unreasonable in the face of our despatch, but you will not think it unnecessary if you consider that our machinery might not have worked very smooth, and that meanwhile all that was lowered was in the way of exploding. So interminable a period as now followed I do believe never before entered into the experiences of a man. The cold was intense, and we had to move about; but also were we repeatedly

coming to a halt to look at our watches and cast our eyes over the ice. It was like standing under a gallows with the noose around the neck waiting for the cart to move off. My own suspense became torture ; but I commanded my face. The Frenchman, on the other hand, could not control the torments of his expectation and fear.

“ Holy Virgin ! ” he would cry, “ suppose we are blown up too ? suppose we are engulfed in the ice ? suppose it should be vomited up in vast blocks which in falling upon us must crush us to pulp and smash the decks in ? ”

At one moment he would call himself an idiot for not remaining on the rocks at a distance and watching the explosion, and even make as if to jump off the vessel, then immediately recoil from the idea of setting his foot upon a floor that before he could take ten strides might split into chasms, with hideous uproar under him. At another moment he would run to the companion and descend out of my sight, but reappear after a minute or two wildly shaking his head and swearing that if waiting was insupportable in the day-

light, it was ten thousand times worse in the gloom and solitude of the interior.

I was too nervous and expectant myself to be affected by his behaviour ; but his dread of the explosion upheaving lumps of ice was sensible enough to determine me to post myself under the cover of the hatch and there await the blast, for it was a stout cover and would certainly screen me from the lighter flying pieces.

It was three or four minutes past the hour and I was looking breathlessly at my watch when the first of the explosions took place. Before the ear could well receive the shock of the blast the whole of the barrels exploded along with some twelve or fourteen parcels. Tassard, who stood beside me, fell on his face, and I believed he had been killed. It was so hellish a thunder that I suppose the blowing up of a first-rate could not make a more frightful roar of noise. A kind of twilight was caused by the rise of the volumes of white smoke out of the ice. The schooner shook with such a convulsion that I was persuaded she had been split. Vast showers of splinters of ice fell as if from the sky, and rained like arrows

through the smoke, but if there were any great blocks uphove they did not touch the ship. Meanwhile, the other parcels were exploding in their places, sometimes two and three at a time, sending a sort of sickening spasms and throes through the fabric of the vessel, and you heard the most extraordinary grinding noises rising out of the ice all about, as though the mighty rupture of the powder crackled through leagues of the island. I durst not look forth till all the powder had burst, lest I should be struck by some flying piece of ice, but unless the schooner was injured below she was as sound as before, and in the exact same posture, as if afloat in harbour, only that of course her stern lay low with the slope of her bed.

I called to Tassard and he lifted his head.

"Are you hurt?" said I.

"No, no," he answered. "'Tis a Spaniard's trick to fling down to a broadside. Body of St. Joseph, what a furious explosion!" and so saying he crawled into the companion and squatted beside me. "What has it done for us?"

"I don't know yet," said I; "but I believe the

schooner is uninjured. *That* was a powerful shock!" I cried, as a half-dozen of bags blew up together in the crevices deep down.

The thunder and tumult of the rending ice accompanied by the heavy explosions of the gunpowder so dulled the hearing that it was difficult to speak. That the mines had accomplished our end was not yet to be known; but there could not be the least doubt that they had not only occasioned tremendous ruptures low down in the ice, but that the volcanic influence was extending far beyond its first effects by making one split produce another, one weak part give way and create other weaknesses, and so on, all round about us and under our keel, as was clearly to be gathered by the shivering and spasms of the schooner, and by the growls, roars, blasts, and huddle of terrifying sounds which arose from the frozen floor.

It was twenty minutes after the hour at which the mines had been framed to explode when the last parcel burst; but we waited another quarter of an hour to make sure that it *was* the last, during all which time the growling and roaring

noises deep down continued, as if there was a battle of a thousand lions raging in the vaults and hollows underneath. The smoke had been settled away by the wind, and the prospect was clear. We ran below to see to the fire and receive five minutes of heat into our chilled bodies, and then returned to view the scene.

I looked first over the starboard side and saw the great split that had happened in the night torn in places into immense yawns and gulfs by the fall of vast masses of rock out of its sides; but what most delighted me was the hollow sound of washing water. I lifted my hand and listened.

“’Tis the swell of the sea flowing into the opening!” I exclaimed.

“That means,” said Tassard, “that this side of the block is dislocated from the main.”

“Yes,” cried I. “And if the powder ahead of the bows has done its work, the heave of the ocean will do the rest.”

We made our way on to the forecastle over a deep bed of splinters of ice, lying like wood-shavings upon the deck, and I took notice as I walked that every glorious crystal pendant that

had before adorned the yards, rigging, and spars had been shaken off. I had expected to see a wonderful spectacle of havoc in the ice where the barrels of gunpowder had been poised, but saving many scores of cracks where none was before, and vast ragged gashes in the mouths of the crevices down which the barrels had been lowered, the scene was much as heretofore.

The Frenchman stared and exclaimed, "What has the powder done? I see only a few cracks."

"What it may have done, I don't know," I answered; "but depend on't such heavy charges of powder must have burst to some purpose. The dislocation will be below; and so much the better, for 'tis *there* the ice must come asunder if this block is to go free."

He gazed about him, and then rapping out a string of oaths, English, Italian, and French, for he swore in all the languages he spoke, which, he once told me, were five, he declared that for his part he considered the powder wasted, that we'd have done as well to fling a hand-grenade into a fissure, that a thousand barrels of powder would

be but as a popgun for rending the schooner's bed from the main, and in short, with several insulting looks and a face black with rage and disappointment, gave me very plainly to know that I had not only played the fool myself, but had made a fool of him, and that he was heartily sorry he had ever given himself any trouble to contrive the cursed mines or to assist me in a ridiculous project that might have resulted in blowing the schooner to pieces and ourselves with it.

I glanced at him with a sneer, but took no further notice of his insolence. It was not only that he was so contemptible in all respects, a liar, a rogue, a thief, a poltroon, hoary in twenty walks of vice, there was something so unearthly about a creature that had been as good as dead for eight-and-forty years, that it was impossible anything he said could affect me as the rancorous tongue of another man would. I feared and hated him because I knew that in intent he was already my assassin; but the mere insolences of so incredible a creature could not but find me imperturbable.

And perhaps in the present instance my own

disappointment put me into some small posture of sympathy with his passion. Had I been asked before the explosions happened what I expected, I don't know that I should have found any answer to make; and yet, though I could not have expressed my expectations, which after all were but hopes, I was bitterly vexed when I looked over the bows and found in the scene nothing that appeared answerable to the uncommon forces we had employed. Nevertheless, I felt sure that my remark to the Frenchman was sound. A great show of uphove rocks and fragments of ice might have satisfied the eye; but the real work of the mines was wanted below; and since the force of the mighty explosion must needs expend itself somewhere, it was absurd to wish to see its effects in a part where its volcanic agency would be of little or no use.

“There is nothing to be seen by staring!” exclaimed the Frenchman presently, speaking very sullenly. “I am hungry and freezing, and shall go below!” And with that he turned his back and made off, growling in his throat as he went.

I got upon the ice and stepped very carefully to the starboard side and looked down the vast split there. The sea in consequence of the slope did not come so far, but I could hear the wash of the water very plain. It was certain that the valley in which we lay was wholly disconnected from the main ice on this side. I passed to the larboard quarter, and here too were cracks wide and deep enough to satisfy me that its hold was weak. It was forward of the bows where the barrels had been exploded that the ice was thickest and had the firmest grasp; but its surface was violently and heavily cracked by the explosions, and I thought to myself if the fissures below are as numerous, then certainly the swell of the sea ought to fetch the whole mass away. But I was now half frozen myself and pining for warmth. It was after one o'clock. The wind was piping freshly, and the great heavy clouds in swarms drove stately across the sky.

"It may blow to-night," thought I; "and if the wind hangs as it is, just such a sea as may do our business will be set running." And thus musing I entered the ship and went below.

CHAPTER V.

A CHANGE COMES OVER THE FRENCHMAN.

TASSARD was dogged and scowling. Such was his temper that had I been a small or weak man, or a person likely to prove submissive, he would have given a loose to his foul tongue and maybe handled me very roughly. But my demeanour was cold and resolved, and not of a kind to improve his courage. I levelled a deliberate semi-contemptuous gaze at his own fiery stare, and puzzled him, too, I believe, a good deal by my cool reserve. He muttered whilst we ate, drinking plentifully of wine, and garnishing his draughts with oaths and to spare; and then, after falling silent and remaining so for the space of twenty minutes, during which I lighted my pipe and sat with my feet close to the furnace, listening with eager ears to the sounds of the ice and the dull crying of the wind, he exclaimed sulkily, "Your

scheme is a failure. The schooner is fixed. What's to be done now?"

"I don't know that my scheme is a failure," said I. "What did you suppose? that the blast would blow the ice with the schooner on it into the ocean clear of the island? If the ice is so shaken as to enable the swell to detach it, my scheme will have accomplished all I proposed."

"*If!*" he cried scornfully and passionately. "*If* will not deliver us nor save the treasure. I tell you the schooner is fixed—as fixed as the damned in everlasting fire. Be it so!" he cried, clenching his fist. "But you must meddle no more! The *Boca del Dragon* is mine—*mine*, d'ye see, now that they're all dead and gone but me"—smiting his bosom—"and if ever she is to float, let nature or the devil launch her: no more explosions with the risks your failure has made her and me run!"

His voice sank; he looked at me in silence, and then with a wild grin of anger he exclaimed, "What made you awake me? I was at peace—neither cold, hungry, nor hopeless! What demon forced

you to bring me to this—to bring me back to *this?*”

“Mr. Tassard,” said I coldly, “I don’t ask your pardon for my experiment; I meant well, and to my mind it is no failure yet. But for disturbing your repose I do sincerely beg your forgiveness, and solemnly promise you, if you will return to the state in which I found you, that I will not repeat the offence.”

He eyed me from top to toe in silence, filled and lighted his hideous pipe, and smoked with his back turned upon me.

Had there been another warm place in the schooner I should have retired to it, and left this surly and scandalous savage to the enjoyment of his own company. His temper rendered me extremely uneasy. The arms-room was full of weapons; he might draw a pistol upon me and shoot me dead before I should have time to clench my hand. Nor did I conceive him to have his right mind. His panic terrors and outbursts of rage were such extremes of behaviour as suggested some sort of organic decay within. He had been for eight-and-forty years insensible;

in all that time the current of life had been frozen in him, not dried up and extinguished ; therefore, taking his age to be fifty-five when the frost seized him, he would now be one hundred and three years old, having subsisted into this great span of time in fact, though confronting me with the aspect of an elderly man merely. Death ends time, but this man never had been dead, or surely it would not have been in the power of brandy and chafing and fire to arouse him ; and though all the processes of nature had been checked in him for near half a century, yet he must have been throughout as much alive as a sleeping man, and consequently when he awoke he arose with the weight of a hundred and three years upon his brain, which may suffice to account for the preternatural peculiarities of his character.

After sitting a long while sullenly smoking in silence, he fetched his mattress and some covers, lay down upon it, and fell fast asleep. I admired and envied this display of confidence, and heartily wished myself as safe in his hands as he was in mine. The afternoon passed. I was on deck a half-dozen times, but never witnessed the

least alteration in the ice. My spirits sank very low. There was bitter remorseless defiance in the white, fierce rigid stare of the ice, and I could not but believe with the Frenchman that all our labour and expenditure of powder was in vain. There was no more noticeable weight in the wind, but the sea was beginning to beat with some strength upon the coast, and the schooner sometimes trembled to the vibrations of the blows. There was also a continuous crackling noise coming up out of the ice, and just as I came on deck on my third visit, a block of ice, weighing I dare say a couple of hundred tons, fell from the broken shoulder on the starboard quarter, and plunged with a roar like a thunderclap into the chasm that had opened in the night.

I sat before the furnace extremely dejected, whilst the Frenchman snored on his mattress. I could no longer flatter myself that the explosions had made the impression I had expected on the ice, and my mind was utterly at a loss. How to deliver myself from this horrible situation I could not imagine. As to the treasure, why, if the chests had all been filled with gold, they might

have gone to the bottom there and then for me, so utterly insignificant did their value seem as against the pricelessness of liberty and the joy of deliverance. Had I been alone I should have had a stouter heart, I dare say, for then I should have been able to do as I pleased ; but now I was associated with a bloody-minded rogue whose soul was in the treasure, and who was certain to oppose any plan I might propose for the construction of a boat or raft out of the material that formed the schooner. The sole ray of hope that gleamed upon me broke out of the belief that this island was going north, and that when we had come to the height of the summer in these seas, the wasting of the coast or the dislocation of the northern mass would release us.

Yet this was but poor comfort too ; it threatened a terrible long spell of waiting, with perhaps disappointment in the end, and months of enforced association with a wretch with whom I should have to live in fear of my life.

When I was getting supper Tassard awoke, quitted his mattress, and came to his bench.

“Has anything happened whilst I slept?” said he.

"Nothing," I answered.

"The ice shows no signs of giving?"

"I see none," said I.

"Well," cried he, with a sarcastic sneer, "have you any more fine schemes?"

"'Tis your turn now," I replied. "Try *your* hand. If you fail, I promise you I shall not be disappointed."

"But you English sailors," said he, wagging his head and regarding me with a great deal of wildness in his eye, "speak of yourselves as the finest seamen in the world. Justify the maritime reputation of your nation by showing me how we are to escape with the schooner from the ice."

"Mr. Tassard," said I, approaching him and looking him full in the face, "I would advise you to sweeten your temper and change your tone. I have borne myself very moderately towards you, submitted to your insults with patience, and have done you some kindness. I am not afraid of you. On the contrary, I look upon you as a swaggering bully and a hoary villain. Do you understand me? I am a desperate man in a desperate situation. But if I don't fear death, depend upon it, I

don't fear *you*—and I take God to witness that if you do not use me with the civility I have a right to expect, I will kill you."

My temper had given way ; I meant every word I spoke, and my air and sincerity rendered my speech very formidable. I approached him by another stride ; he started up, as I thought, to seize me, but in reality to recoil, and this he did so effectually as to tumble over his bench, and down he fell, striking his bald head so hard that he lay for several minutes motionless.

I stood over him till he chose to sit erect, which he presently did, rubbing his poll and looking at me with an air of mingled bewilderment and fear.

"This is scurvy usage to give a shipmate in distress," said he. "'Od's life, man! I had thought there was some sense of humour in you. Your hand, Mr. Rodney ; I feel dazed."

I helped him to rise, and he then sat down in a somewhat rickety manner, rubbing his eyes. It might have been fancy, it might have been the illusion of the furnace light combined with the venerable appearance his long hair and naked pate

gave him, but methought in those few minutes he had grown to look twenty years older.

“Never concern yourself about my humour, Mr. Tassard,” said I, preserving my determined air and coming close to him again. “How is it to stand between us? I leave the choice to you. If you will treat me civilly you’ll not find me wanting in every disposition to render our miserable state tolerable; but if you insult me, use me injuriously, and act the pirate over me, who am an honest man, by God, Mr. Tassard, I will kill you.”

He stooped away from me, and raised his hand in a posture as if to fend me off, and cried in a whining manner, “I lost my head—this gunpowder business hath been a hellish disappointment, look you, Mr. Rodney. Come! We will drink a can to our future amity!”

I answered coldly that I wanted no more wine and bade him beware of me, that he had gone far enough, that our hideous condition had filled my soul with desperation and misery, and that I would not have my life on this frozen schooner made more abominable than it was by his swagger, lies,

and insults, and I added in a loud voice and in a menacing manner that death had no terrors for me, and that I would dispatch him with as little fear as I should meet my doom, whatever shape it took.

I marched on deck, not a little astounded by the cowardice of the old rascal, and very well pleased with the marked impression my bearing and language had produced on him. Not that I supposed for a moment that my bold comportment would save me from his knife or his pistol when he should think proper to make away with me. No. All I reckoned upon was cowing him into a civiller posture of mind, and checking his aggressions and insolence. As to his murdering me, I was very sure he would not attempt such an act whilst we remained imprisoned. Loneliness would have more horrors for him than for me; and though my machinery of mines had apparently failed, he was shrewd enough, despite his rage of disappointment, to understand that more was to be done by two men than by one, and that between us something might be attempted which would be impracticable by a simple pair of hands, and particularly old hands, such as his.

I stayed but a minute or two on deck. Such was the cold that I do not know I had ever felt it more biting and bitter. The sound of foaming waters filled the wind, and the wind itself was blowing fairly strong, in gusts that screamed in the frozen rigging or in blasts that had the deep echo of the thunder-claps of the splitting ice. The clouds were numerous and dark with the shadow of the night; and the swiftness of their motion as they sailed up out of the south-west quarter was illustrated by the leaping of the few bright stars from one dusky edge to another.

I returned below and sat down. The Frenchman asked me no questions. He had his can in the oven and his death's head in his great hand, and puffed out clouds of smoke of the colour of his beard, and indeed in the candle and fire light looked like a figure of old Time with his long nose and bald head. I addressed one or two civil remarks to him, which he answered in a subdued manner, discovering no resentment whatever that I could trace in his eyes or the expression of his countenance; and being wishful to show that I bore no malice I talked of pirates and their

usages, and asked him if the *Boca del Dragon* fought under the red or black flag.

"Why, the black flag, certainly," said he; "but if we met with resistance, it was our custom to haul it down and hoist the red flag, to let our opponents know we should give no quarter."

"Where is your flag locker?" said I.

"In my berth," he answered.

"I should like to see the black flag," I exclaimed: "'tis the one piece of bunting, I believe, I have never viewed."

"I'll fetch it," said he, and taking the lanthorn went aft very quietly, but with a certain stagger in his walk, which I should have put down to the wine if it was not that his behaviour was free from all symptoms of ebriation. The change in him surprised me, but not so greatly as you might suppose; indeed, it excited my suspicions rather than my wonder. Fear worked in him unquestionably, but what I seemed to see best was some malignant design which he hoped to conceal by an air of conciliation and a quality of respectful *bonhomie*.

He came back with a flag in his hand, and we

spread it between us ; it was black, with a yellow skull grinning in the middle, over this an hourglass, and beneath a cross-bones.

“ What consternation has this signal caused and does still cause ! ” said I, surveying it, whilst a hundred fancies of the barbarous scenes it had flown over, the miserable cries for mercy that had swept up past it to the ear of God, crowded into my mind. “ I think, Mr. Tassard,” said I, “ that our first step, should we ever find ourselves afloat in this ship, must be to commit this and all other flags of a like kind on board to the deep. There is evidence in this piece of drapery to hang an angel.”

He let fall his ends of the flag and sat down suddenly.

“ Yes,” he answered, sending a curious rolling glance around the cook-room and at the same time bringing his hand to the back of his head, “ this is evidence to dangle even an honest man than you, sir. All flags but the ensign we resolve to sail under must go—all flags, and all the wearing apparel, and—and—but ”—here he muttered a curse—“ we are fixed—there is to be no sailing.”

He shook his head and covered his eyes. His manner was strange, and the stranger for his quietude.

I said to him, "Are you ill?"

He looked up sharply and cried vehemently, "No, no!" then stretched his lips in a very ghastly grin and turned to take the can from the oven, but his hand missed it, and he appeared to grope as if he were blind, though he looked at the can all the time. Then he caught it and brought it to his mouth, but trembled so much that he spilt as much as he drank, and after putting the can back sat shaking his beard and stroking the wet off it, methought, in a very mechanical lunatic way.

I thought to myself, "Is this behaviour some stratagem of his? What device can such a bearing hide? If he is acting, he plays his part well."

I rolled the black flag into a bundle and flung it into a corner, and, resuming my seat and my pipe, continued, more for civility's sake than because of any particular interest I took in the subject, to ask him questions about the customs and habits of pirates.

"I believe," said I, "the buccaneers are so resolute in having clear ships that they have neither beds nor seats on board."

"The English," he answered, speaking slowly and letting his pipe droop whilst he spoke with his eyes fixed on deck, "not the Spanish. 'Tis the custom of most English pirates to eat and sleep upon the decks for the sake of a clear ship, as you say. The Spaniard loves comfort—you may observe his fancy in this ship."

"How is the plunder partitioned?" I asked.

"Everything is put into the common chest, as we call it, and brought to the mast and sold by auction— Strange!" he cried, breaking off and putting his hand to his brow. "I find my speech difficult. Do you notice I halt and utter thickly?"

I replied, No; his voice seemed to be the same as hitherto.

"Yet I feel ill. Holy Mother of God, what is this feeling coming upon me? O Jesus, how faint and dark!"

He half rose from his bench, but sat again, trembling as if the palsy had seized him, and I

noticed his head dotted with beads of sweat. He had drunk so much wine and spirits throughout the day that a dram would have been of no use to him.

I said, "I expect it will be the blow on the back of your head, when you fell just now, that has produced this feeling of giddiness. Let me help you to lie down" (for his mattress was on deck); "the sensation will pass, I don't doubt."

If he heard he did not heed me, but fell amuttering and crying to himself. And now I did certainly remark a quality in his voice that was new to my ear; it was not, as he had said, a labour or thickness of utterance, but a dryness and parchedness of old age, with many breaks from high to low notes, and a lean noise of dribbling threading every word. He sweated and talked and muttered, but this was from sheer terror; he did not swoon, but sat with a stoop, often pressing his brows and gazing about him like one whose senses are all abroad.

"Gracious Mother of all angels!" he exclaimed, crossing himself several times, but with a feeble, most agitated hand, and speaking in

French and English, and sometimes interjecting an invocation in Italian or Spanish, though I give you what he said in my own tongue; "surely I am dying. O Lord, how frightful to die! O holy Virgin, be merciful to me. I shall go to hell—O Jesu, I am past forgiveness—for the love of heaven, Mr. Rodney, some brandy! Oh that some saint would interpose for me! Only a few years longer—grant me a few years longer—I beseech for time that I may repent!" and he extended one quivering hand for the brandy (of which a draught stood melted in the oven) and made the sign of the cross upon his breast with the other, whilst he continued to whine out in his cracked pipes the wildest appeals for mercy, saying a vast deal that I durst not venture to set down, so plentiful and awful were his clamours for time that he might repent, though he never lapsed into blasphemy, but on the contrary discovered an agony of religious horror.

I was much astonished and puzzled by this illness that had come upon him, for, though he talked of darkness and faintness and of dying, he continued to sit up on his bench and to take pulls

at the can of brandy I had handed to him. It might be, indeed, that a sudden faintness had terrified him nearly out of his senses with a prospect of approaching death ; but that would not account for the peculiar note and appearance of age that had entered his figure, face, and voice. Then an extraordinary fancy occurred to me : Had the whole weight of the unhappy wretch's years suddenly descended upon him ? Or, if not wholly arrived, might not these indications in him mark the first stages of a gradually increasing pressure ? The heat, the vivacity, the fierceness, spirits, and temper of the life I had been instrumental in restoring to him probably illustrated his character as it was eight-and-forty years since ; that had flourished artificially from the moment of his awakening down to the present hour ; but now the hand of Time was upon this man, whose age was above an hundred. He might be decaying and wasting, even as he sat there, into such an intellectual condition and physical aspect as he would possess and submit had he come without a break into his present age.

I was fascinated by the mystery of his vitality,

and breathlessly watched him as if I expected to witness some harlequin change in his face and mark the transformation of his polished brow into the lean austerity of wrinkles. His voice sank into a mere whisper at last, and then, ceasing to speak altogether, he dropped his chin on to his bosom and began to sway from side to side, catching himself from falling with several paralytic starts, but without lifting his head or opening his eyes that I could see, and manifesting every symptom of extreme drowsiness.

I got up and laid my hand on his shoulder, on which he turned his face and viewed me with one eye closed, the other scarce open.

"How are you feeling now?" said I.

"Sleepy, very sleepy," he answered.

"I'll put your mattress into your hammock," said I, "and the best thing you can do is to go and turn in properly and get a long night's rest, and to-morrow morning you'll feel yourself as hearty as ever."

He mumbled some answer which I interpreted to signify "Very well!" so I shouldered his mattress and slung a lanthorn in his cabin, and then

returned to help him to bed. He sat reeling on the bench, his chin on his breast, catching himself up as before with little sharp terrified recoveries, and I was forced to put my hand on him again to make him understand I had come back. He then made as if to rise, but trembled so violently that he sank down again with a groan, and I was obliged to put my whole strength to the lifting of him to get him on to his legs. He leaned heavily upon me, breathing hard, stooping very much and trembling. When we got to his cabin I perceived that he would never be able to climb into his hammock, nor had I the power to hoist a man of his bulk so high. To end the perplexity I cut the hammock down and laid it on the deck, and covering him with a heap of clothes, unslung the lanthorn, wished him good-night, closed the door, and returned to the furnace.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ICE BREAKS AWAY.

It was not yet eight o'clock. I was restless in my mind, under a great surprise, and was not sleepy. I filled a pipe, made me a little pannikin of punch, and sat down before the fire to think. If ever I had suspected the accuracy of my conjecture that the Frenchman's sudden astonishing indisposition was the effect of his extreme age coming upon him and breaking down the artificial vitality with which he had bristled into life under my hands, I must have found fifty signs to set my misgivings at rest in his drowsiness, nodding, bowed form, weakness, his tottering and trembling, and other features of his latest behaviour. If I was right, then I had reason to be thankful to Almighty God for this unparalleled and most happy dispensation, for now I should have nothing

to fear from the old rogue's vindictiveness and horrid greed. Supposing him to be no more than a hundred, the infirmities of five score years would stand between him and me, and protect me as effectually as his death. I had nothing to dread from a man who could scarce stand, whose palsied hand could scarce clasp a knife, whose evil tongue could scarce articulate the terrors of his soul or the horrors of his recollection.

The wonder of it all was so great it filled me with admiration and astonishment. Had he been dead and come to life again, as Lazarus, or one of those bodies which arose during the time our Lord hung upon the cross, then, questionless, he must have picked up the chain of his life at the link which death had broken, and continued his natural walk into age and decay (though interrupted by a thousand years of the sepulchre) as if his life had been without this black hiatus, and he was proceeding steadily and humanly from the cradle. But collecting that the vital spark could never have been extinguished in him, I understood that time, which has absolute control over life, still knew him as its prey during all those forty-

eight years in which he had lain frozen ; that it had seized him now and suddenly, and pinned upon his back the full burden of his lustres. This I say, I believed ; but the morrow, of course, would give me further proof.

Well, 'twas a happy and gracious deliverance for me. He could do me no hurt ; the scythe had sheared his talons, and all without occasioning my conscience the least uneasiness whatever : whereas, but for this interposition, I did truly and solemnly believe that it must have come to my having had to slay him that I might preserve my own life.

Thus I sat for an hour smoking and wetting my lips with the punch, whilst the fire burned low, so exulting in the thought of my escape from the treacherous villain I had recovered from the grave, and in the feeling that I might now be able to go to rest, to move here and there, to act as I pleased without being haunted and terrified by the shadow of his foul intent, that I hardly gave my mind for a moment to the situation of the schooner nor to the barren consequences of my fine scheme of mines.

The wind blew strong. I could hear the humming of it in every fibre of the vessel. The bed on which she rested trembled to the blows of the seas upon the rocks. From time to time, in the midst of my musing, I started to the sharp claps of parted ice. Still feeling sleepless, I threw a few coals on the fire, and catching sight of the pirate flag opened it on the deck as wide as the space would permit, and sat down to contemplate the hideous insignia embroidered on it. My mind filled with a hundred fancies as my gaze went from the skull on the black field to the death's-head pipe that had fallen from the grasp of Tassard and lay on the deck, and I was sitting lost in a deep dreamlike contemplation, when I was startled and shocked into instantaneous activity by a blast of noise, louder than any thunder-clap that ever I heard, ringing and booming through the schooner. This was followed by a second and then a third, at intervals during which you might have counted ten, and I became sensible of a strange sickening motion, which lasted about twenty or thirty moments, such as might be experienced by one swiftly descending

in a balloon, or in falling from a height whilst pent up in a coach.

For a little while the schooner heeled over so violently that the benches and all things movable in the cook-room slid as far as they could go, and I heard a great clatter and commotion among the freight in the hold. She then came upright again, and simultaneously with this a vast mass of water tumbled on to the deck and washed over my head, and then fell another and then another, all in such a way as to make me know that the ice had broken and slipped the schooner close to the ocean, where she lay exposed to its surges, but not free of the ice, for she did not toss or roll.

I seized the lanthorn and sprang to the cabin, where I hung it up, and mounted the companion-steps. But as I put my hand to the door to thrust it open a sea broke over the side and filled the decks, bubbling and thundering past the companion-hatch in such a way as to advise me that I need but open the door to drown the cabin. I waited, my heart beating very hard, mad to see what had happened, but not daring to trust my-

self on deck lest I should be immediately swept into the sea. 'Twas the most terrible time I had yet lived through in this experience. To every blow of the billows the schooner trembled fearfully; the crackling noises of the ice was as though I was in the thick of a heavy action. The full weight of the wind seemed to be upon the ship, and the screeching of it in the iron-like shrouds pierced to my ear through the hissing and tearing sounds of the water washing along the decks, and the volcanic notes of the surges breaking over the vessel. I say, to hear all this and not to be able to see, to be ignorant of the situation of the schooner, not to know from one second to another whether she would not be crushed up and crumbled into staves, or be hurled off her bed and be pounded to fragments upon the ice-rocks by the seas, or be dashed by the cannonading of the surge into the water and turned bottom up, made this time out and away more terrible than the collision between the *Laughing Mary* and the iceberg.

I drew my breath with difficulty, and stood upon the companion-ladder hearkening with

straining ears, my hand upon the door. I was now sensible of a long-drawn, stately, solemn kind of heaving motion in the schooner, which I put down to the rolling of the ice on which she rested ; and this convinced me that the mass in whose hollow she had been fixed had broken away and was afloat and riding upon the swell that under-ran the billows. But I was far too much alarmed to feel any of those transports in which I must have indulged had this issue to my scheme happened in daylight and in smooth water. I was terrified by the apprehensions which had occurred to me even whilst I was at work on the mines ; I mean, that if the bed broke away the schooner would make it top-heavy and that it would capsize ; and thus I stood in a very agony of expectancy, caged like a rat, and as helpless as the dead.

Half an hour must have passed, during which time the decks were incessantly swept by the seas, insomuch that I never once durst open the door even to look out. But nothing having happened to increase my consternation in this half-hour, though the movement in the schooner

was that of a very ponderous and majestic rolling and heaving, showing her bed to be afloat, I began to find my spirits and to listen and wait with some buddings of hope and confidence. At the expiration of this time the seas began to fall less heavily and regularly on to the deck, and presently I could only hear them breaking forward, but without a quarter their former weight, and nothing worse came aft than large brisk showers of spray.

I armed myself with additional clothing for the encounter of the wet, cold, and wind, and then pushed open the door and stepped forth. The sky was dark with rolling clouds, but the ice put its own light into the air, and I could see as plain as if the first of the dawn had broken. It was as I had supposed : the mass of the valley in which the schooner had been sepulchred for eight-and-forty years had come away from the main, and lay floating within a cable's length of the coast. A stranger, wonderfuller picture human eye never beheld. The island shore ran a rampart of faintness along the darkness to where it died out in liquid dusk to right and left. The

schooner sat upon a bed of ice that showed a surface of about half an acre; her stern was close to the sea, and about six feet above it. On her larboard quarter the slope or shoulder of the acclivity had been broken by the rupture, and you looked over the side into the clear sea beyond the limit of the ice there; but abreast of the fore-shrouds the ice rose in a kind of wall, a great splinter it looked of what was before a small broad-browed hill, and the wind or the sea having caused the body on which the schooner lay to veer, this wall stood as a shield betwixt the vessel and the surges, and was now receiving those blows which had heretofore struck her starboard side amidships and filled her decks.

Oh for a wizard's inkhorn, that I might make you see the picture as I view it now, even with the eye of memory! The posture of the little berg pointed the schooner's head seawards, about west; the ice-terraces of the island lay with the wild strange gleam of their own snow radiance upon them upon the larboard quarter; around the schooner was the whiteness of her frozen seat, and her outline was an inky, exquisitely defined

configuration upon it ; above the crystal wall on the larboard bow rose the spume of the breaking surge in pallid bodies, glancing for an instant, and sometimes shaking a thunder into the ship when a portion of the seething water was flung by the wind upon the forecastle deck ; at moments a larger sea than usual overran the ice on the larboard beam and quarter, and boiled up round about the buttocks of the schooner. To leeward the smooth backs of the billows rolled away in jet, but the fitful throbbings and feeble flashings of froth commingled with the dim shine of the ice were over all, tincturing the darkness with a spectral sheen, giving to everything a quality of unearthliness that was sharpened yet by the sounds of the wind in the gloom on high and the hissing and foaming of waters sending their leagues-distant voices to the ear upon the wings of the icy blast.

The wind, as I have said, blew from the southwest, but the trend of the island-coast was northeast, and as the mass of ice I was upon in parting from the main had floated to a cable's length from the cliffs, there was not much danger, whilst the

wind and sea held, of the berg (if I may so term it) being thrown upon the island. That the ice under the schooner was moving, and if so, at what rate, it was too dark to enable me to know by observing the marks on the coast. There was to be no sleep for me that night, and knowing this, I stepped below and built up a good fire, and then went with the lanthorn to see how Tassard did and to give him the news; but he was in so deep a sleep, that after pulling him a little without awakening him I let him lie, nothing but the sound of his breathing persuading me that he had not lapsed into his old frozen state again.

Of all long nights this was the longest I ever passed through. I did truly believe that the day was never to break again over the ocean. I must have gone from the fire to the deck thirty or forty times. The schooner continued upright. I had no fear of her oversetting; she sat very low, and the ice also showed but a small head above the water, and as the body of it lay pretty flat, then, even supposing its submerged bulk was small, there was little

chance of its capsizing. I also noticed that we were setting seawards—that is to say, to the westward—by a noticeable shrinking of the pallid coast. But I never could stay long enough above to observe with any kind of narrowness, the wind being full of the wet that was flung over the ice-wall and the cold unendurable.

All night I kept the fire going, and on several occasions visited the Frenchman, but found him motionless in sleep. I kept too good a lookout to apprehend any sudden calamity short of capsizal, which I no longer feared, and during the watches of that long night I dreamt a hundred waking dreams of my deliverance, of my share of the treasure, of my arriving in England, quitting the sea for ever, and setting up as a great squire, marrying a nobleman's daughter, driving in a fine coach, and ending with a seat in Parliament and a stout well-sounding handle to my name.

At last the day broke; I went on deck and found the dawn brightening into morning. The wind had fallen and with it the sea; but there

still ran a middling strong surge, and the breeze was such as, in sailors' language, you would have shown your top-gallant sails to. I could now take measure of our situation, and was not a little astonished and delighted to observe the island to be at least a mile distant from us, and the north-east end lying very plain, the ocean showing beyond it, though in the south-west the ice died out upon the sea-line. That we had been set away from the main by some current was very certain. There was a westerly tendency in all the bergs which broke from the island, the small ones moving more quickly than the large, for the sea in the north and west was dotted with at least fifty of these white masses, great and little. On the other hand, the wind and seas were answerable for the progress we had made to the north.

The wall of ice (as I call it) that had stood over against the larboard bow was gone, and the seas tumbled with some heaviness of froth and much noise over the ice, past the bows, and washed past the bends on either side in froth rising as high as the channels. I noticed a great quantity of broken ice sinking and rising in the dark green

curls of the billows, and big blocks would be hurled on to the schooner's bed and then be swept off, sometimes fetching the bilge such a thump as seemed to swing a bellow through her frame. It was only at intervals, however, that water fell upon the decks, for the ice broke the beat of the moderating surge and forced it to expend its weight in spume, which there was not strength of wind enough to raise and heave. Since the vessel continued to lie head to sea, my passionate hope was that these repeated washings of the waves would in time loosen the ice about her keel, in which case it would not need much of a billow, smiting her full bows fair, to slide her clean down and off her bed and so launch her. There were many clouds in the heavens, but the blue was very pure between. The morning brightening with the rising of the sun, I directed an earnest gaze along the horizon, but there was nothing to see but ice. Some of the bergs, however, and more particularly the distant ones, stole out of the blue atmosphere to the sunshine with so complete a resemblance to the lifting canvas of ships that I would catch myself staring fixedly, my heart beating

fast. But there was no dejection in these disappointments; the ecstasy that filled me on beholding the terrible island, the hideous frozen prison whose crystal bars I had again and again believed were never to be broken, now lying at a distance with its northern cape imperceptibly opening to our subtle movement, was so violent that I could not have found my voice for the tears in my heart.

This, then, was the result of my scheme; it was no failure, as Tassard had said; as he owed his life to me, so now did he owe me his liberty. Nay, my transports were so great that I would not suffer myself to feel an instant's anxiety touching the condition of the schooner—I mean whether she would leak or prove sound when she floated—and how we two men were to manage to navigate so large a craft, that was still as much spellbound aloft in her frozen canvas and tackle as ever she had been in the sepulchre in which I discovered her.

I went below, and put the provisions we needed for breakfast into the oven, and entered Tassard's cabin. On bringing the lanthorn to his face as he

lay under half a score of coats upon the deck, I perceived that he was awake, and, my heart being full, I cried out cheerily, "Good news! good news! the gunpowder did its work! The ice is ruptured and we are afloat, Mr. Tassard, afloat—and progressing north!"

He looked at me vacantly, and giving his head a shake exclaimed, "How can I crawl from this mound? My strength is gone."

If I was amazed that the joyful intelligence I had delivered produced no other response than this querulous inquiry, I was far more astonished by the sound of his voice. It was the most cracked and venerable pipe that ever tickled the throat of old age, a mingling of wailing falsettos and of hollow gasping growls, the whole very weak. I threw the clothes off him, and said, "Do you wish to rise? I will bring your breakfast here if you wish."

He looked at me, but made no answer. I bawled again, and observed (by the dim lanthorn light) that he watched my lips with an air of attention; and whilst I waited for his reply he said, "I don't hear you."

Anxious to ascertain to what extent his hearing was impaired, I kneeled on the deck, and putting my lips to his ear said, not very loud, "Will you come to the cook-house?" which he did not hear; and then louder, "Will you come to the cook-house?" which he did not hear either. I believed him stone-deaf till, on roaring with all the power of my lungs, he answered "Yes."

I took him by the hands and hauled him gently on to his feet, and had to continue holding him or he must have fallen. Time was beginning with him when he had gone to bed, and the remorseless old soldier had completely finished his work whilst his victim slept. I viewed the Frenchman whilst I grasped his hands, and there stood before me a shrunk, tottering, deaf, bowed, feeble old man. What was yesterday a polished head was now a shrivelled pate, as though the very skull had shrunk and left the skin to ripple into wrinkles and sit loose and puckered. His hands trembled excessively. But his lower jaw was held in its place by his teeth, and this perpetuated in the aged dwindled countenance something of the likeness of the fierce and sinister visage that had

confronted me yesterday. I was thunderstruck by the alteration, and stood overwhelmed with awe, confusion, and alarm. Then, re-collecting my spirits, I supported the miserable relic to the fire, putting his bench to the dresser that he might have a back to lean against.

He could scarce feed himself—indeed, he could hardly hold his chin off his breast. He had gone to bed a man, as I might take it, of fifty-six, and during the night the angel of Time had visited him, and there he sat, *a hundred and three years of age!*

He looked it. Ha, thought I, I was dreading your treachery yesterday; there is nothing more to fear. Besides that he was nearly stone deaf, he could hardly see; and I was sure, if he should be able to move at all, he could not stir a leg without the help of sticks. I was going to roar out to him that we were adrift, but he looked so imbecile that I thought, to what purpose? If there be aught of memory in him, let him sit and chew the cud thereof. He cannot last long; the cold must soon stop his heart. And with that I went on eating my breakfast in silence, but greatly affected

by this astonishing mark of the hand of Providence, and under a very heavy and constant sense of awe, for the like of such a transformation I am sure had never before encountered mortal eyes, and it was terrifying to be alone with it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRENCHMAN DIES.

HOWEVER, if I expected my Frenchman to sit very long silent, he soon undeceived me by beginning to complain in his tremulous aged voice of his weakness and aching limbs.

“ ’Tis the terrible cold that has affected me,” said he, whilst his head nodded nervously. “ I feel the rheumatism in every bone. There is no weakness like the rheumatic, I have heard, and ’tis true, ’tis true. It may lay me along—yes, by the Virgin, ’tis rheumatism—what else ?” Here he was interrupted by a long fit of coughing, and when it was ended he turned to address me again, but looked at the bulkhead on my right, as if his vision could not fix me. “ But my capers are not over !” he cried, setting up his rickety shrill throat ; “ no, no ! Vive l’amour ! vive la joie ! The sun is coming—the sun is the fountain of life

—ay, mon brave, there are some shakes in these stout legs yet !” He shook his head with a fine air of cunning and knowingness, grinning very oddly ; and then, falling grave with a startling suddenness, he began to dribble out a piratical love-story he had once before favoured me with, describing the charms of the woman with a horrid leer, his head nodding with the nervous affection of age all the time, whilst he looked blindly in my direction—a hideous and yet pitiful object !

I could not say that his mind was gone, but he talked with many breaks for breath, and not very coherently, as though the office of his tongue was performed by habit rather than memory, so that he often went far astray and babbled into sentences that had no reference to what had gone before, though on the whole I managed to collect what he meant. I was sure he had not power enough of vision to observe me in the dim reddish light of the cook-room, and this being so, he could not know I was present, more particularly as he could not hear me, yet he persisted in his poor babble, which was a behaviour in him that,

more than even the matter of his speech, persuaded me of his imbecility.

He made no reference to our situation, and in solemn truth I believe his memory retained no more than a few odds and ends of the evil story of his life, like bits of tarnished lace and a rusty button or two lying in the bottom of a dark chest that has long been emptied of the clothes it once held.

But my condition made such heavy demands upon my thoughts that I had very much less attention to give to this surprising phenomenon of senility than its uncommon merits deserved. It has puzzled every member of the faculty that I have mentioned it to, the supposition being that, given the case of suspended animation, there is no waste, and the person would quit his stupor with the same powers and aspect as he possessed when he entered it, though it lasted a thousand years. But granting there is no waste, Time is always present waiting to settle accounts when the sleeper lifts his head. There may be an artificial interval, during which the victim might show as my pirate did, but the poised load of

years is severed on a sudden by the scythe and becomes superincumbent, and with the weight comes the transformation; and this theory, as the only eye-witness of the marvellous thing, I will hold and maintain whilst I have breath in my body to support it.

I left him gabbling to himself, sometimes grinning as if greatly diverted, sometimes lifting a trembling hand to help his ghostly recital by an equally ghostly dumb-show, and went on deck, satisfied that he was too weak to get to the fire and meddle with it, but sufficiently invigorated by his long night's rest to sit up with out tumbling off the bench.

This time I carried with me an old perspective glass I had noticed in the chest in my cabin—the chest in which were the nautical instruments, charts, and papers—and levelled it along the coast of the island, but it was a poor glass, and I found I could manage nearly as well with the naked eye. There was no change of any kind, only that there was a sensible diminution in the blowing of the wind and a corresponding decrease in the height of the seas. The ice

stretched in a considerable bed on either hand the ship and ahead of her; the water frothed freely over it, and there was a great jangling and flashing of broken pieces, but the hull was no longer heavily hit by them.

I got into the main chains to view the body of the vessel, and noticed with satisfaction that the constant pouring of the sea had thinned down the frozen snow to the depth of at least a foot. This encouraged me to hope that the restless tides would sap to her keel at least, and put her into a posture to be easily launched by the blow of a surge upon her bows—that is if fortune continued to keep her head on. But by this time, my transports having moderated, I was grown fully sensible of the extreme peril of our position. Should the sea rise and the ice bring her broadside to it, it was inevitable, it seemed to me, that she must go to pieces. Or if the ice on which she floated, fouled some other berg it might cost us all our spars. Then again occurred the dismal question, Suppose she should launch herself, would she float? For eight-and-forty years she had been high and dry; never a caulker's hammer

had rung upon her in all that time. Tassard had spoken of her as a stout ship, and so she was, I did not doubt; but the old rogue talked as if she had been stranded six months only! I had no other hope than that the intense cold had treated her timbers as it had treated the bodies of her people, an expectation not unreasonable when I considered the state of her stores and the manifest substantiality of her inward fabric.

I regained the deck and stepped over to the pumps. There were two of them, but built up in snow. My business was to save my life if I could, and the schooner too, for the sake of the great treasure in her. Nothing must disconcert me I said to myself—I must spare no labour, but act a hearty sailor's part and ask for God's countenance. So I trotted below, and selecting some weapons from the arms-room, such as a tomahawk, a spade-headed spear, a pike and a chopper, I returned to the pumps and fell upon them with a will. The ice flew about me, but I continued to smite, the exercise making me hot and renewing my spirits, and in an hour—but it took me an hour—I had chopped, hacked, and

beaten one of the pumps pretty clear of its thick crystal coat. They were what is called brake-pumps—that is to say, pumps which are worked by handles. The ice, of course, held them immovable, but they looked to be perfectly sound, in good working order, though there would be neither chance nor need to test them until the schooner went afloat.

I cleared the other one and was well satisfied with my morning's work. But I did bitterly lament the lack of a little crew. Even the Frenchman as he was yesterday would have served my turn, for between us we might have made shift to clamber aloft, and with hatchets break the sails free of their ice bonds, and so expose canvas enough to hold the wind, which could not have failed to impart a swifter motion to the berg. But with my single pair of hands I could only look up idly at the yards and gaffs standing hard as granite. Still, even such surface as the spars and rigging offered to the breeze helped our progress. We were but a very little berg, nay, not a berg, but rather a sheet of ice lying indifferently flat upon the sea, and, as I

believe, without much depth. Our spars and gear were as if the ice itself were rigged as a ship, and then there was the height of the hull besides to offer to the breeze a tolerable resistance for its offices of propulsion. In this way I explain our progress ; but whatever the cause, certain it was that our bed of ice was fairly under weigh, and at noon the island of ice bore at least half a league distant from us, and we had opened the sea broadly past its northern cape.

I have often diverted myself with wondering what sort of impression the posture of our schooner would have made on the minds of sailors sighting us from their deck. We looked to be floating out of water, and mariners who regard the devil as a conjuror must have accepted us as one of his pet inventions.

The many icebergs which encumbered the sea filled me with anxiety. We were travelling faster than they, and it seemed impossible that we could miss striking one or another of them. Yet perilous as they were, I could not but admire their beautiful appearance as they floated upon the dark blue of the running waters, flashing out

very gloriously to the sun with a sparkling of tints upon their whiteness as if fires of twenty different colours had been kindled upon their craggy steeps, and then fading into a sulky watchet to the dull violet shadowing of the passing clouds. I particularly marked a very brilliant scene on the opening of five or six of them to the sunshine. They lay in such wise that the shadow of the cloud covered them all as with a veil, the skirts of which, trailing, left them to leap one after the other into the noontide dazzle; and as each one shot from the shadow the flash was like a volcanic spouting of white flame enriched with the prismatic dyes of emeralds, rubies, sapphires, and gems of lovely hue.

To determine the hour and our position I fetched a quadrant from my cabin, and was happily just in time to catch the sun crossing the meridian. My watch was half an hour fast, so I had been out of my reckoning to the extent of thirty minutes ever since I had been cast away. I made our latitude to be sixty-four degrees twenty-eight minutes south, and the computation was perhaps near enough.

This business ended, I went to the cook-house to prepare dinner, and the first object I saw was Tassard flat upon his face near the door that opened into the cabin. He groaned when I picked him up, which I managed without much exertion of strength, for so much had he shrunk that I dare say more than half his weight lay in his clothes; and set him upon his bench with his back to the dresser. I put my mouth to his ear and roared, "Are you hurt?" His head nodded as if he understood me, but I question if he did. He was the completest picture of old age that you could imagine. I fetched a couple of spears from the arms-room, and, cutting them to his height, put one in each hand that he might keep himself propped; and whilst my own dinner was broiling I made him a mess of broth with which I fed him, for now that he had the sticks he would not let go of them. But in any case I doubt if his trembling hand could have lifted the spoon to his lips without capsizing the contents down his beard.

With some small idea of rallying the old villain, I mixed him a very stiff bumper of brandy, which

he supped down out of my hand with the utmost avidity. The draught soon worked in him, and he began to move his head about, seeking me in his blind way, and then cried in his broken notes, "I have lost the use of my legs and cannot walk. Mother of God, what shall I do! O holy St. Antonio, what is to become of me?"

I guessed from this that, impelled by habit or some small spur of reason, he had risen to go on deck and fallen. He went on vapouring pitifully, gazing with sufficient steadfastness to let me understand that his vision received something of my outline, though he would fix his eyes either to left or right of me, as though he was not able to see if he looked straight; and this and his mournful cackle and his nodding head, bowed form, propped hands, and diminished face made him as distressful and melancholy a picture of Time as ever mortal man viewed. He broke off in his rambling to ask for more brandy, taking it for granted that I was still in the cook-room, for I never spoke, and I filled a can for him and as before held it to his mouth, which he opened wide, a piece of behaviour which went to show that

some of his wits still hung loose upon him. This was a strong dose, and co-operating with the other, soon seized hold on his head, and presently he began to laugh to himself and talk, and even broke into a stave or two—some French song which he delivered in a voice like the squeaking of a rat alternating with the growling of a terrier.

I guess his stumbling upon this old French catch (which I took it to be from seeing him feebly flourish one of his sticks as if inviting a chorus) put him upon speaking his own tongue altogether, for though he continued to chatter with all the volubility his breath would permit during the whole time I sat eating, not one word of English did he speak, and not one word therefore did I understand. Seeing how it must be with him presently, I brought his mattress and rugs from his cabin, and had scarce laid them down when he let fall one of his sticks and drooped over. I grasped him, and partly lifting, partly hauling, got him on his back and covered him up. In a few minutes he was asleep.

I trust I shall not be deemed inhuman if I confess that I heartily wished his end would come.

If he went on living he promised to be an intolerable burden to me, being quite helpless. Besides, he was much too old for this world, in which a man who reaches the age of ninety is pointed to as a sort of wonder.

As there was nothing to be done on deck, I filled my pipe and made myself comfortable before the furnace, and was speedily sunk in meditation. I reviewed all the circumstances of my case and considered my chances, and the nimble heels of imagination carrying me home with this schooner, I asked myself, suppose I should have the good fortune to convey the treasure in safety to England, how was I to secure it? Let me imagine myself arrived in the Thames. The whole world stares at the strange antique craft sailing up the river; she would be boarded and rummaged by the customs people, who of course would light upon the treasure. What then? I knew nothing of the law; but I reckoned, since I should have to tell the truth, that the money, ore, and jewellery would be claimed as stolen property, and I dismissed with a small reward for bringing it home. There was folly in such contemplation at such a

time, when perhaps at this hour to-morrow the chests might be at the bottom of the sea, and myself a drowned sailor floating three hundred fathoms deep. But man is a froward child, who builds mansions out of dreams, and, jockeyed by hope, sets out at a gallop along the visionary road to his desires; and my mind was so much taken up with considering how I should manage when I brought the treasure home, that I spent a couple of hours in a conflict of schemes, during which time it never once occurred to me to reflect that I was a good way from home still, and that much must happen before I need give myself the least concern as to the securing of the treasure.

Nothing worth recording happened that day. The wind slackened, and the ice travelled so slow that at sundown I could not discover that we had made more than a quarter of a mile of progress to the north since noon, though we had settled by half as much again that distance westwards. Whilst I was below I could hear the ice crackling pretty briskly round about the ship, which gave me some comfort; but I could never see any

change of consequence when I looked over the side or bows, only that at about four o'clock, whilst I was taking a view from the forecastle, a large block broke away from beyond the star-board bow with the report of a swivel gun.

I had not closed my eyes on the previous night, and was tired out when the evening arrived, and, as no good could come of my keeping a watch, for the simple reason that it was not in my power to avert anything that might happen, I tumbled some further covering over the Frenchman, who had lain on the deck all the afternoon, sometimes dozing, sometimes waking and talking to himself, and appearing on the whole very easy and comfortable, and went to my cabin.

I slept sound the whole night through, and on waking went on deck before going to the cook-house and lighting the furnace (as was my custom), so impatient was I to observe our state and to hear such news as the ocean had for me. It was a very curious day, somewhat darksome, and a dead calm, with a large long swell out of the south-east. The sky was full of clouds, with a stooping appearance in the hang of

them that reminded you of the belly of a hammock; they were of a sallow brown, very uncommon; some of them round about sipped the sea-line, and their shadows, obliterating those parts of the cincture which they overhung, broke the continuity of the horizon as though there were valleys in the ocean there. A good part of our bed of ice was gone, at least a fourth of it; but the schooner still lay as strongly fixed as before. I had come to the deck half expecting to find her afloat from the regular manner of her heaving, and was bitterly disappointed to discover her rooted as strongly as ever in the ice, though the irritation softened when I noticed how the bed had diminished. The mass with the ship upon it rose and sank with the sluggish squatting motion of a water-logged vessel. It was an odd sensation to my legs after their long rest from such exercise. The heaving satisfied me that the base of the bed did not go deep, but at the same time it was all too solid for me, I could not doubt, for had the sheet been as thin as I had hoped it, it must have given under the weight of the schooner and released her.

The island lay a league distant on the larboard beam, and looked a wondrous vast field of ice going into the south, and it stared very ghastly upon the dark green sea out of the clouds whose gloom sank behind it. I could not observe that we had drifted anything to the north, whilst our set to the westwards had been steady though snail-like. The sea in the north and north-west swarmed with bergs, like great snowdrops on the green undulating fields of the deep. Now and again the swell, in which fragments of ice floated with the gleam of crystal in liquid glass, would be too quick for our dull rise and overflow the bed, brimming to the channels with much noise of foam and pouring waters, but the interposition of the ice took half its weight out of it, and it never did more than send a tremble through the vessel.

What to make of the weather I knew not. Certainly, of all the caprices of this huge cold sea, its calms are the shortest lived, but this knowledge helped me to no other. The clouds did not stir. In the north-east a beam of sunshine stood like a golden waterspout, its foot in a little flood of glory.

It stayed all the while I was on deck, showing that the clouds had scarce any motion, and made the picture of the sea that way beyond nature to my sight, by the contrast of the defined shaft of gold, burning purely, with the dusk of the clouds all about, and of the pool of dazzle at its foot with the ugly green of the water that melted into it.

I went below and got about lighting the fire. The Frenchman lay very quiet, under as many clothes as would fill a half-dozen of sacks. It was bitterly cold, sharper in the cook-house than I had ever remembered it, and I could not conceive why this should be, until I recollected that I had forgotten to close the companion-hatch before going to bed. I prepared some broth for my companion, and dressed some ham for myself, and ate my breakfast, supposing he would meanwhile awake. But after sitting some time and observing that he did not stir, a suspicion flashed into my mind ; I kneeled down, and clearing his face, listened. He did not breathe. I brought the lanthorn to him, but his countenance had been so changed by his unparalleled emergence

from a state of middle life into extreme old age, he was so puckered, hollowed, gaunt, his features so distorted by the great weight of his years that I was not to know him dead by merely viewing him. I threw the clothes off him, listened at his mouth breathlessly, felt his hands, which were ice-cold. Dead indeed! thought I. Great Father, 'tis Thy will! And I rose very slowly and stood surveying the silent figure with an emotion that owed its inspiration partly to the several miracles of vitality I had beheld in him during our association, and to a bitter feeling of loneliness that swelled up in me.

Yes! I had feared and detested this man, but his quick transformation and silent dark exit affected me, and I looked down upon him sadly. Yet, to be perfectly candid with you, I recollect that, though it occurred to me to test if life was out of him by bringing him close to the fire and chafing him and giving him brandy, I would not stir. No, I would not have moved a finger to recover him, even though I should have been able to do so by merely putting him to the furnace. He was dead, and there was an end; and without

further ado I carried him into the fore-castle and threw a hammock over him, and left him to lie there till there should come clear water to the ship to serve him for a grave.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCHOONER FREES HERSELF.

ALL day long the weather remained sullen and still, and the swell powerful. I was on deck at noon, looking at an iceberg half a league distant when it overset. It was a small berg, though large compared with most of the others ; yet such a mighty volume of foam boiled up as gave me a startling idea of the prodigious weight of the mass. The sight made me very anxious about my own state, and to satisfy my mind I got upon the ice and walked round the vessel, and to get a true view of her posture went to the extreme end of the rocks beyond her bows, and finally came to the conclusion that, supposing the ice should crumble away from her sides so as to cause the weight of the schooner to render it top-heavy, her buoyancy on touching the water would certainly tear her keel out of its frosty setting and leave her floating.

Indeed, so sure was I of this that I saw, next to the ice splitting and freeing her in that way, the best thing that could happen would be its capsizing.

I regained the ship, and had paused an instant to look over the side, when I perceived the very block of ice on which I had come to a halt break from the bed with a smart clap of noise, and completely roll over. Only a minute before had I been standing on it, and thus had sixty seconds stood between me and death, for most certainly must I have been drowned or killed by being beaten against the ice by the swell! I fell upon my knees and lifted up my hands in gratitude to God, feeling extraordinarily comforted by this further mark of His care of me, and very strongly persuaded that He designed I should come off with my life after all, since His providence would not work so many miracles for my preservation if I was to perish by this adventure.

These thoughts did more for my spirits than I can well express; and the intolerable sense of loneliness was mitigated by the knowledge that I was watched, and therefore not alone.

The day passed I know not how. The shadow

as of tempest hung in the air, but never a cat-paw did I see to blurr the rolling mirror of the ocean. The hidden sun sank out of the breathless sky, tingeing the atmosphere with a faint hectic, which quickly yielded to the deepest shade of blackness. The mysterious desperate silence, however, that on deck weighed oppressively on every sense, as something false, menacing, and malignant in these seas, was qualified below by the peculiar straining noises in the schooner's hold caused by the swinging of the ice upon the swell. I was very uneasy ; I dreaded a gale. It was impossible but that the vessel must quickly go to pieces in a heavy sea upon the ice if she did not liberate herself. But though this excited a depression melancholy enough, nothing else that I can recollect contributed to it. When I reviewed the apprehension the Frenchman had raised, and reflected how unsupportable a burden he must have become, I was very well satisfied to be alone. Time had fortified me ; I had passed through experiences so surprising, encountered wonders so preternatural, that superstition lay asleep in my soul, and I found nothing

to occasion in me the least uneasiness in thinking of the lifeless shrivelled figure of what was just now a fierce, cowardly, untamed villain, lying in the forecastle.

I made a good supper, built up a large fire, and mixed myself a hearty bowl of punch, not with the view of drowning my anxieties—God forbid ! I was too grateful for the past, too expectant of the future, to be capable of so brutish a folly—but that I might keep myself in a cheerful posture of mind ; and being sick of my own company took the lanthorn to the cabin lately used by the Frenchman, and found in a chest there, among sundry articles of attire, a little parcel of books, some in Dutch and Portuguese, and one in English.

It was a little old volume, the author's name not given, and proved to be a relation of the writer's being taken by pirates, and the many dangers he underwent. There was nothing in it, to be sure, that answered to my own case, yet it interested me mightily as an honest unvarnished narrative of sea perils ; and I see myself now in fancy reading it, the lanthorn hanging by a laniard close beside my head, the book in one hand, my pipe

in the other, the furnace roaring pleasantly, my feet close to it, and the atmosphere of the oven fragrant with the punch that I put there to prevent it from freezing. I had come to a certain page and was reading this passage : "*Soon after we were on board we all went into the great cabin, where we found nothing but destruction. Two scrutores I had there were broke to pieces, and all the fine goods and necessaries in them were all gone. Moreover, two large chests that had books in them were empty, and I was afterwards informed they had been all thrown overboard ; for one of the pirates on opening them swore there was jaw-work enough (as he called it) to serve a nation, and proposed that they might be cast into the sea, for he feared there might be some books amongst them that might breed mischief enough, and prevent some of their comrades from going on in their voyage to hell, whither they were all bound*"—I say, I was reading this passage, not a little affected by the impiety of the rascal, for whose portrait my dead Frenchman might very well have sat, when I was terrified by an extraordinary loud explosion, that burst so near and rang with such a prodigious clear note of

thunder through the schooner that I vow to God I believed the gunpowder below had blown up. And in this suspicion I honestly supposed myself right for a moment, for on running into the cabin I was dazzled by a crimson flame that clothed the whole interior with a wondrous gush of fire; but this being instantly followed by such another clap as the former, I understood a thunderstorm had broken over the schooner.

It was exactly overhead, and that accounted for the violence of the crashes, which were indeed so extreme that they sounded rather like the splitting of enormous bodies of ice close to, than the flight of electric bolts. The hatch lay open; I ran on deck, but scarce had passed my head through the companion when down came a storm of hail, every stone as big as a pigeon's egg, and in all my time I never heard a more hellish clamour. There was not a breath of air. The hail fell in straight lines, which the fierce near lightning flashed up into the appearance of giant harp strings, on which the black hand of the night was playing those heavy notes of thunder. I sat in the shelter of the companion, very anxious and

alarmed, for there was powder enough in the hold to blow the ship into atoms; and the lightning played so continuously and piercingly that it was like a hundred darts of fire, violet, crimson, and sun-coloured, in the grasp of spirits who thrust at the sea, all over its face, with swift movement of the arms, as though searching for the schooner to spear her.

The hailstorm ceased as suddenly as it had burst. I stepped on to the deck, and 'twas like treading on shingle. There was not the least motion in the air, and the stagnation gave an almost supernatural character to the thunder and lightning. The ocean was lighted up to its furthest visible confines by the flames in the sky, and the repeated explosions of thunder exceeded the roaring of the ordnance of a dozen squadrons in hot fight. The ice-coast in the east, and the two score bergs in the north and west leapt out of one hue into another; and were my days in this world to exceed those of old Abraham, I should to my last breath remember the solemn and terrible magnificence of that picture of lightning-coloured ice, the sulphur-tinctured shapes of the

swollen bodies of clouds bringing their dark electric mines together in a huddle, the answering flash of the face of the deep to the lancing of each spiral dazzling bolt, with the air as still as the atmosphere of a cathedral for the thunder to roll its echoes through.

There was a second furious shower of hail, and when that was over I looked forth, and observed that the storm was settling into the north-east, whence I concluded that what draught there might be up there sat in the south-west. Nor was I mistaken; for half an hour after the first of the outburst, by which time the lightning played weak and at long intervals low down, and the thunder had ceased, I felt a crawling of air coming out of the south-west, which presently briskened into a small steady blowing. But not for long. It freshened yet and yet; the wrinkles crisped into whiteness on the black heavings; they grew into small surges with sharp cubbish snarlings preludious of the lion's voice; and by ten o'clock it was blowing in strong squalls, the seas rising, and the clouds sailing swiftly in smoke-coloured rags under the stars.

The posture of the ice inclined the schooner's starboard bow to the billows ; and in a very short time she was trembling in every bone to the blows of the surges which rolled boiling over the ice there and struck her, flinging dim clouds of spume in the air, which soon set the scuppers gushing. My case was that of a stranded ship, with this difference only, that a vessel ashore lies solid to the beating of the waves, whereas the ice was buoyant, it rose and fell, sluggishly it is true, and so somewhat mitigated the severity of the shocks of water. But, spite of this, I was perfectly sure that unless the bed broke under her or she slipped off it, she would be in pieces before the morning. It was not in any hull put together by human hands to resist the pounding of those seas. The weight of the mighty ocean along whose breast they raced was in them, and though the wind was no more than a brisk gale, each billow by its stature showed itself the child of a giantess. The ice-bed was like a whirlpool with the leap and flash and play of the froth upon it. The black air of the night was whitened by the storms of foam-flakes which flew over the vessel. The

roaring of the broken waters increased the horrors of the scene. I firmly believed my time was come. God had been merciful, but I was to die now. As to making any shift to keep myself alive after the ship should be broken up, the thought never entered my head. What could I do? There was no boat. I might have contrived some arrangement of booms and casks to serve as a raft, but to what purpose? How long would it take the wind and sea to freeze me?

I crouched in the companion-way hearkening to the uproar around, feeling the convulsions of the schooner, fully prepared for death, dogged and hopeless. No, I was not afraid. Suffering and expectation had brought me to that pass that I did not care. "'Tis such an end as hundreds and thousands of sailors have met," I remember thinking; "it is the fittest exit for a mariner. I have sinned in my time, but the Almighty God knows my heart." To this tune ran my thoughts. I held my arms tightly folded upon my breast, and with set lips waited for the first of those crashing and rending sounds which would betoken the ruin and destruction of the schooner.

So passed half an hour; then, being half perished with the cold, I went to the furnace, for when the vessel went to pieces it would matter little in what part of her I was, and warmed myself and took a dram as a felon swallows a draught on his way to the scaffold. Were I to attempt to describe the character of the thunderous noises in the ship I should not be believed. The seas raised a most deafening roaring as they boiled over the ice and rolled their volumes against the vessel's sides. Every curl swung a load of broken frozen pieces against the bows and bends, and the shocks resounded through her like blows from cyclopean hammers. It was as if I had been seated in the central stagnant heart of a small revolving hurricane, feeling no faintest sigh of air upon my cheek, whilst close around whirled the hellish tormenting conflict of white waters and yelling blasts.

On a sudden—in a breath—I felt the vessel rise. She was swung up with the giddy velocity of a hunter clearing a tall gate; she sank again, and there was a mighty concussion forward, then a pause of steadiness whilst you might have

counted five, then a wild upward heave, a sort of sharp floating fall, a harsh grating along her keel and sides, as though she was being smartly warped over rocks, followed by an unmistakable free pitching and rolling motion.

I had sprung to my feet and stood waiting. But the instant I gathered by the movements of her that she was released I sprang like a madman up the companion-steps. The sea, breaking on her bow, flew in heavy showers along the deck and half blinded me. But I was semi-delirious, and having sat so long with Death's hand in mine was in a passionately defiant mood, with a perfect rage of scorn of peril in me, and I walked right on to the forecastle, giving the flying sheets of water there no heed. In a minute a block of sea tumbled upon me and left me breathless; the iciness of it cooled my mind's heat, but not my resolution. I was determined to judge as best I could by the light of the foam of what had happened, and holding on tenaciously to whatever came to my hand and progressing step by step I got to the forecastle and looked ahead.

Where the ice was the water tumbled in milk ;

'twas four or five ship's lengths distant, and I could distinguish no more than that. I peered over the lee bow, but could see no ice. The vessel had gone clear; how, I knew not and can never know, but my own fancy is that she split the bed with her own weight when the sea rose and threw the ice up, for she had floated on a sudden, and the noises which attended her release indicated that she had been forced through a channel.

I returned aft, barely escaping a second deluge, and looked over the quarter; no ice was there visible to me. The vessel rolled horribly, and I perceived that she had a decided list to starboard, the result of the shifting of what was in her when the ice came away from the main with her, and it was this heel that brought the sea washing over the bow. I took hold of the tiller to try it, but either the helm was frozen immovable or the rudder was jammed in its gudgeons or in some other fashion fixed.

Had she been damaged below? was she taking in water? I knew her to be so thickly sheathed with ice that, unless it had been scaled off in

places by the breaking of her bed, I had little fear (until this covering melted or dropped off by the working of the frame) of the hull not proving tight. I should have been coated with ice myself had I stayed but a little longer in my wet clothes in that piercing wind, so I ran below, and bringing an armful of clothes from my cabin to the cook-room, was very soon in dry attire, and making an extraordinary figure, I don't question, in the buttons, lace, and fripperies of the old-fashioned garments.

The incident of the schooner's release from the ice had come upon me so suddenly, and at a time too when my mind was terribly disordered, that I scarce realized the full meaning of it until I had shifted myself and fortified my heart with a dram and got warm in the glow of the furnace. By this time she had fallen into the trough and was labouring like a cask; that she would prove a heavy roller in a seaway a single glance at her fat buttocks and swelling bilge might have persuaded me, but I never could have dreamt she would wallow so monstrously. The oscillation was rendered more formidable by her list, and there

were moments when I could not keep my feet. She was shipping water very freely over her star-board rail, but this did not much concern me, for the break of the poop-deck kept the after part of the vessel indifferently dry, and the forecastle and main hatches were well secured. But there was one great peril I knew not how to provide against—I mean the flotilla of icebergs in the north and west. They lay in a long chain upon the sea, and though to be sure there was no doubt a wide channel between each, through which it might have been easy to carry a ship under control, yet there was every probability of a vessel in the defenceless condition of the schooner, without a stitch of sail on her and under no other government of helm than a fixed rudder, being swept against one of those frozen floating hills, when indeed it would be good-night to her and to me too, for after such a catastrophe the sun would never rise for me or her again.

Meanwhile I was crazy to ascertain if the schooner was taking in water. If there was a sounding-rod in the ship I did not know where to lay my hands upon it. But he is a poor sailor who

is slow at substitutes. There were several spears in the arms-room (piratical plunder, no doubt) with mere spikes for heads, like those weapons used by the Caffres and other tribes in that country; they were formed of a hard heavy wood. I took a length of ratline line and secured it to one of these spears, and carried it on deck with the powder-room bull's-eye lamp; but when I probed the sounding-pipe I found it full of ice, and as it was impossible to draw the pumps, I flung my ingenious sounding-rod down in a passion of grief and mortification.

Yet was I not to be beaten. Such was my temper, had the devil himself confronted me, I should have defied him to do his worst, for I had made up my mind to weather him out. I entered the forecastle, lanthorn in hand, prized open the hatch and dropped into the hold. It needed an experienced ear to detect the sobbing of internal waters amid the yearning gushes, the long gurgling washings, the thunderous blows, and shrewd rain-like hissings of the seas outside. I listened with strained hearing for some minutes, but distinguished no sounds to alarm me with assurance of

water in the hold. I could not mistake. I hearkened with all my might, but the noise was outside. I thanked God very heartily, and got out of the hold and put the hatch on. There was no need to go aft and listen. The schooner was by the head, and there could be no water in the run that would not be forward too.

Being reassured in respect of the staunchness of the hull, I returned to the fire and proceeded to equip myself for a prolonged watch on deck. Whilst I was drawing on a great pair of boots I heard a knocking in the after part of the vessel. I supposed she had drifted into a little field of broken ice, and that she would go clear presently, and I finished arming myself for the weather; but the knocking continuing, I went into the cabin where I heard it very plain, and walked as far as the lazarette hatch, where I stood listening. The noises were a kind of irregular thumping accompanied by a peculiar grinding sound. In a moment I guessed the truth, rushed on deck, and by the dim light in the air saw the long tiller mowing to and fro! The beat of the beam seas had unlocked the frozen bonds of the rudder, and there

swung the tiller, as though like a dog the ship was wagging her tail for joy !

The vessel lay along, rolling so as to bring her starboard rail to a level with the sea ; her main deck was full of water, and the froth of it combined with the ice that glazed her made her look like a fabric of marble as she swung on the black fold ere it broke into snow about her. I seized the tiller and ran it over hard a-starboard, and I had not held it in that posture half a minute when to my inexpressible delight I observed that she was paying off. Her head fell slowly from the sea ; she lurched drunkenly, and some tons of black water rolled over the bulwarks ; she reeled consumedly to larboard, and rose squarely and ponderously to the height of the surge that was now abaft the beam. In a few moments she was dead before it, the helm amidships, the wind blowing sheer over the stern with half its weight seemingly gone through the vessel running, the tall seas chasing her high stern and floating it upwards, till looking forward was like gazing down the slope of a hill.

My heart was never fuller than then. I was

half crazy with the passion of joy that possessed me. Consider the alternations of hope and bitter despair which had been crowded into that night ! We may wonder in times of security that life should be sweet, and admit the justice of the arguments which several sorts of writers, and the poets even more than the parsons, use in defence of death. But when it comes to the pinch human nature breaks through. When the old man in *Æsop* calls upon Death to relieve him, and the skeleton suddenly rises, the old man changes his mind, and thinks he will go on trying for himself a little longer. I liked to live, and had no mind for a wet shroud, and this getting the schooner before the wind, along with the old familiar feeling of the decks reeling and soaring and sinking under my feet, was so cordial an assurance of life that, I tell you, my heart was full to breaking with transport.

However, I was still in a situation that made prodigious demands upon my coolness and wits. The wind was south-west, the schooner was running north-east ; the bulk of the icebergs lay on the larboard bow, but there were others right

ahead, and to starboard, where also lay the extremity of the island, though I did not fear *that* if I could escape the rest. It was a dark night ; methinks there should have been a young moon curled somewhere among the stars, but she was not to be seen. The clouds flew dark and hurriedly, and the frosty orbs between were too few to throw a light. The ocean ahead and around was the duskier for the spectral illumination of the near foam and the glimmer of the ice-coated ship. I tested the vessel with the tiller and found she responded but dully ; she would be nimbler under canvas no doubt, but it was enough that she should answer her helm at all. Oh, I say, I was mighty thankful, most humbly grateful. My heart was never more honest to its Maker than then.

She crushed along, pitching pitifully, the dark seas on either hand foaming to her quarters, and her rigging querulous with the wind. Had the Frenchman been alive to steer the ship, I might have found strength enough for my hands in the vigour of my spirit to get the spritsail yard square and chop its canvas loose—nay, I might

have achieved more than that even; but I could not quit the tiller now. I reckoned our speed at about four miles an hour, as fast as a hearty man could walk. The high stern, narrow as it was, helped us; it was like a mizzen in its way; and all aloft being stout to start with and greatly thickened yet by ice, the surface up there gave plenty for the gale to catch hold on; and so we drove along.

I could just make out the dim pallid loom of the coast of ice upon the starboard beam, and a blob or two of faintness—most elusive and not to be fixed by the eye staring straight at them—on the larboard bow. But it was not long before these blobs, as I term them, grew plainer, and half a score swam into the dusk over the bowsprit end, and resembled dull small visionary openings in the dark sky there, or like stars magnified and dimmed into the merest spectral light by mist. I passed the first at a distance of a quarter of a mile; it slid by phantasmally, and another stole out right ahead. This I could have gone widely clear of by a little shift of the helm, but whilst I was in the act of starboarding three or four bergs sud-

denly showed on the larboard bow, and I saw that unless I had a mind to bring the ship into the trough again I must keep straight on. So I steered to bring the berg that was right ahead a little on the bow, with a prayer in my soul that there might be no low-lying block in the road for the schooner to split upon. It went by within a pistol-shot. I was very much accustomed to the sight of ice by this time, yet I found myself glancing at this mass with pretty near as much wonder and awe as if I had never seen such a thing before. It was not above thirty feet high, but its shape was exactly that of a horse's head, the lips sipping the sea, the ears cocked, the neck arching to the water. You would have said it was some vast courser rising out of the deep. The peculiar radiance of ice trembled off it like a luminous mist into the dusk. The water boiled about its nose, and suggested a frothing caused by the monster steed's expelled breath. Let a fire have been kindled to glow red where you looked for the eye, and the illusion would have been frightfully grand.

The poet speaks of the spirits of the vasty

deep; if you want to know what exquisite artists they are, enter the frozen silences of the south.

Thus threading my way I drove before the seas and wind, striking a piece of ice but once only, and that a small lump which hit the vessel on the bow and went scraping past, doing the fabric no hurt; but often forced to slide perilously close by the bergs. I needed twenty instead of one pair of eyes. With ice already on either bow, on a sudden it would glimmer out right ahead, and I had to form my resolution on the instant. If ever you have been amid a pack of icebergs on a dark night in a high sea you will understand my case; if not, the pen of a Fielding or a Defoe could not put it before you. For what magic has ink to express the roaring of swollen waters bursting into tall pale clouds against the motionless crystal heights, the mystery of the configuration of the faintness under the swarming shadows of the flying night, the sudden glares of breaking liquid peaks, the palpitating darkness beyond, the plunging and rolling of the ship, making her rigging ring upon the air with the reeling of her masts, the gradual absorption of

the solid mass of dim lustre by the gloom astern, the swift spectral dawn of such another light over the bows, with many phantasmal outlines slipping by on either hand, like a procession of giant ocean-spectres, travelling white and secretly towards the silent dominions of the Pole ?

Half this ice came from the island, the rest of it was formed of bergs too tall to have ever belonged to the north end of that great stretch. It took three hours to pass clear of them, and then I had to go on clinging to the tiller and steering in a most melancholy famished condition for another long half-hour before I could satisfy myself that the sea was free.

But now I was nearly dead with the cold. I had stood for five hours at the helm, during all which time my mind had been wound up to the fiercest tension of anxiety, and my eyes felt as if they were strained out of their sockets by their searching of the gloom ahead, and nature having done her best gave out suddenly, and not to have saved my life could I have stood at the tiller for another ten minutes.

The gear along the rail was so iron-hard that I

could not secure the helm with it, so I softened some lashings by holding them before the fire, and finding the schooner on my return to be coming round to starboard, I helped her by putting the tiller hard a port and securing it. I then went below, built up the fire, lighted my pipe, and sat down for warmth and rest.

CHAPTER IX.

I AM TROUBLED BY THOUGHTS OF THE
TREASURE.

THE weight of the wind in the rigging steadied the schooner somewhat, and prevented her from rolling too heavily to starboard, whilst her list corrected her larboard rolls. So as I sat below she seemed to me to be making tolerably good weather of it. Not much water came aboard; now and again I would hear the clatter of a fall forwards, but at comfortably long intervals.

I sat against the dresser with my back upon it, and being dead tired must have dropped asleep on a sudden—indeed, before I had half smoked my pipe out, and I do not believe I gave a thought to my situation before I slumbered; so wearied was I. The cold awoke me. The fire was out and so was the candle in the

lanthorn, and I was in coffin darkness. This the tinder-box speedily remedied. I looked at my watch—seven o'clock, as I was a sinner! so that my sleep had lasted between three and four hours.

I went on deck and found the night still black upon the sea, the wind the same brisk gale that was blowing when I quitted the helm, the sea no heavier, and the schooner tumbling in true Dutch fashion upon it. I looked very earnestly around but could see no signs of ice. There would be daylight presently, so I went below, lighted the fire, and got my breakfast, and when I returned the sun was up and the sea visible to its furthest reaches.

It was a fine wintry piece; the sea green and running in ridges with frothing heads, the sky very pale among the dark snow-laden clouds, the sun darting a ray now and again, which was swung into the north by the shadows of the clouds until they extinguished it. Remote in the north-west hung the gleam of an iceberg; there was nothing else in sight. Yes—something that comforted me exceedingly, though it was not very many days ago that a like object had heavily

scared me—an albatross, a noble bird, sailing on the windward close enough to be shot. The sight of this living thing was inexpressibly cheering; it put into my head a fancy of ships being at hand, thoughts of help and of human companions. In truth, my imagination was willing to accept it as the same bird that I had frightened away when in the boat, now returned to silently reproach me for my treatment of it. Nay, my lonely eye, my subdued and suffering heart might even have witnessed the good angel of my life in that solitary shape of ocean beauty, and have deemed that, though unseen, it had been with me throughout, and was now made visible to my gaze by the light of hope that had broken into the darkness of my adventure.

Well, supposing it so, I should not have been the only man who ever scared his good angel away and found it faithful afterwards.

I unlashed the tiller and got the schooner before the wind and steered until a little before noon, letting her drive dead before the sea, which carried her north-east. Then securing the helm amidships I ran for the quadrant, and whilst wait-

ing for the sun to show himself I observed that the vessel held herself very steadily before the wind, which might have been owing to her high stern and the great swell of her sides and her round bottom; but be the cause what it might, she ran as fairly with her helm amidships as if I had been at the tiller to check her, a most fortunate condition of my navigation, for it privileged me to get about other work, whilst, at the same time, every hour was conveying me nearer to the track of ships and further from the bitter regions of the south.

I got an observation and made out that the vessel had driven about fifteen leagues during the night. She must do better than that, thought I; and when I had eaten some dinner I took a chopper, and, going on to the forecastle, lay out upon the bowsprit, and after beating the spritsail-yard block clear of the ice, cut away the gaskets that confined the sail to the yard, heartily beating the canvas, that was like iron, till a clew of it fell. I then came in and braced the yard square, and the wind, presently catching the exposed part of the sail, blew more of it out, and yet more, until there

was a good surface showing ; then to a sudden hard blast of wind the whole sail flew open with a mighty crackling, as though indeed it was formed of ice ; but to render it useful I had to haul the sheets aft, which I could not manage without the help of the tackles we had used in slinging the powder over the side ; so that, what with one hindrance and another, the setting of that sail took me an hour and a half.

But had it occupied me all day it would have been worth doing. Trifling as it was as a cloth, its effect upon the schooner was like that of a cordial upon a fainting man. It was not that she sensibly showed nimbler heels to it ; its lifting tendency enabled her to ride the under-running seas more buoyantly, and if it increased her speed by half a knot an hour it was worth a million to me, whose business it was to take the utmost possible advantage of the southerly gale.

I returned to the helm, warm with the exercise, and gazed forward not a little proud of my work. Though the sail was eight-and-forty years old and perhaps older, it offered as tough and stout a surface to the wind as if it was fresh from the

sailmaker's hands, so great are the preserving qualities of ice. I looked wistfully at the topsail, but on reflecting that if it should come on to blow hard enough to compel me to heave the brig to she would never hull with that canvas abroad, I resolved to let it lie, for I could cut away the spritsail if the necessity arose and not greatly regret its loss ; but to lose the topsail would be a serious matter, though if I did not cut it adrift it might carry away the mast for me ; so, as I say, I would not meddle with it.

Finding that the ship continued to steer herself very well, and the better for the spritsail, I thought I would get the body of the old Frenchman overboard and so obtain a clear hold for myself so far as corpses went. I carried the lanthorn into the forecastle, but when I pulled the hammock off him I confess it was not without a stupid fear that I should find him alive. Recollection of his astounding vitality found something imperishable in that ugly anatomy, and though he lay before me as dead and cold as stone, I yet had a fancy that the seeds of life were still in him, that 'twas only the current of his being that had frozen,

that if I were to thaw him afresh he might recover, and that if I buried him I should actually be despatching him.

But though these fancies possessed, they did not control me. I took his watch and whatever else he had in that way, carried him on deck and dropped him over the side, using as little ceremony as he had employed in the disposal of his shipmates, but affected by very different emotions ; for there was not only the idea that the vital spark was still in him ; I could not but handle with awe the most mysterious corpse the eye had ever viewed, one who had lived through a stupor or death-sleep, for eight-and-forty years, in whom in a few hours Time had compressed the wizardry he stretches in others over half a century ; who in a night had shrunk from the aspect of his prime into the lean, puckered, bleared-eyed, deaf, and tottering expression of a hundred years.

But now he was gone ! The bubbles which rose to the plunge of his body were his epitaph ; had they risen blood-red they would have better symbolized his life. The albatross stooped to the

spot where he had vanished with a hoarse salt scream like the laugh of a delirious woman, and the wind, freshening momentarily in a squall, made one think of the spirit of Nature as eager to purify the air of heaven from the taint of the dead pirate's passage from the bulwarks to the water's surface.

All that day and through the night that followed the schooner drove, rolling and plunging before the seas, into the north-east, to the pulling of the spritsail. I made several excursions into the forehold, but never could hear the sound of water in the vessel. Her sides in places were still sheathed in ice, but this crystal armour was gradually dropping off her to the working of her frame in the seas, so that, since she was proving herself tight, it was certain her staunchness owed nothing to the glassy plating. I had seen some strange craft in my day; but nothing to beat the appearance this old tub of a hooker submitted to my gaze as I viewed her from the helm. How so uncouth a structure, with her tall stern, flaring bows, fat buttocks, sloping masts, forecastle-well, and massive head-timbers ever

managed to pursue and overhaul a chase was only to be unriddled by supposing all that she took to be more unwieldy and clumsy than herself. What would a pirate of these days, in his clean-lined polacca or arrowy schooner, have thought of such an instrument as this for the practice of his pretty trade? The ice aloft still held for her spars and rigging the resemblance of glass, and to every sunbeam that flashed upon her from between the sweeping clouds she would sparkle out into many-coloured twinklings, marvellously delicate in colour, and changing their tints twenty times over in a breath through the swiftness of the reeling of the spars.

I should but fatigue you to follow the several little stories of these hours one by one; how I got my food, snatched at sleep, stood at the helm, gazed around the sea-line and the like. Just before sundown I saw a large iceberg in the north, two leagues distant; no others were in sight, but one was enough to make me uneasy, and I spent a very troubled night, repeatedly coming on deck to look about me. The schooner steered herself as if a man stood at the helm. The spritsail further

helped her in this, for, if the curl of a sea under her forefoot brought her to larboard or starboard, the sail forced her back again. Still, it was a very surprising happy quality in her, the next best thing to my having a shipmate, and a wonderful relief to me who must otherwise have brought her to, under a lashed helm, every time I had occasion to leave the deck.

The seaworthiness of the craft, coupled with the reasonable assurance of presently falling in with a ship, rendered me so far easy in my mind as to enable me to think very frequently of the treasure and how I was to secure it. If I fell in with an enemy's cruiser or a privateer I must expect to be stripped. This would be the fortune of war, and I must take my chance. My concern did not lie that way; how was I to protect this property, that was justly mine, against my own countrymen, suppose I had the good fortune to carry the schooner safely into English waters? I had a brother-in-law, Jeremiah Mason, Esq., a Turkey merchant in a small way of business, whose office was in the City of London, and, if I could manage to convey the treasure secretly to him, he would,

I knew, find me a handsome account in his settlement of this affair. But it was impossible to strike out a plan. I must wait and attend the course of events. Yet riches being things which fever the coldest imaginations, I could not look ahead without excitement and irritability of fancy, I should reckon it a hard fate indeed after my cruel experiences, my freeing the vessel from the ice, my sailing her through some thousand of miles of perilous seas, and arriving finally in safety, to be dispossessed of what was strictly mine—as much mine as if I had fished it up from the bottom of the sea, where it must otherwise have lain till the crack of doom.

I remember that, among other ideas, it entered my head to tell the master of the first ship I met, if she were British, the whole story of my adventure, to acquaint him with the treasure, to offer to tranship it and myself to his vessel and abandon the schooner, and to propose a handsome reward for his offices. But I could not bring my mind to trust any stranger with so great a secret. The mere circumstance of the treasure not being mine, in the sense of my having earned it, of its being

piratical plunder, and as much one's as another's, might dull the edge even of a fair-dealing conscience and expose me to the machinations of a heavily tempted mind.

Therefore, though I had no plan, I was resolved at all hazards to stick to the schooner, and, with a view to providing against the curiosity or rummaging of any persons who should come aboard I fell to the following work after getting my breakfast. I hung lanthorns in the run and hatchways and cabin to enable me to pass easily to and fro; I then emptied one of the chests in my cabin and carried it to where the treasure was. The chest I filled nearly three-parts full with money, jewellery, &c., which sank the contents of the other chests to the depth I wanted. I then fetched a quantity of small arms, such as pistols and hangers and cutlasses, and filled up the chests with them, first placing a thickness of canvas over the money and jewellery, that no glitter might show through. To improve the deception I brought another chest to the run, and wholly filled it with cutlasses, powder-horns, pistols, and the like, and so fixed it that it must be the first to come to hand. My cunning amounted to

this: that, suppose the run to be rummaged, the contents of the first chest were sure to be turned out, but, on the other chests being opened, and what they appeared to contain observed, it was as likely as not that the rummagers would be satisfied they were arms-chests, and quit meddling with them.

Herenow might I indulge in a string of reflections on the troubles and anxieties which money brings, quote from Juvenal and other poets, and hold myself up to your merriment by a contemptuous exhibition of myself, a lonely sailor, labouring to conceal his gold from imaginary knaves, toiling in the dark depth of the vessel, and never heeding that, even whilst he so worked, his ship might split upon some half-tide rock of ice, and founder with him and his treasure too, and so on, and so on. But the fact is I was not a fool. Here was money enough to set me up as a fine gentleman for life, and I meant to save it and keep it too, if I could. A man on his deathbed, a man in such peril that his end is certain, can afford to be sentimental. He is going where money is dross indeed, and he is in a posture when to moralize upon human

greed and the vanity of wishes and riches becomes him. But would not a man whose health is hearty, and who hopes to save his life, be worse off than a sheep in the matter of brains not to keep a firm grip of Fortune's hand when she extended it? I know I was very well pleased with my morning's work when I had accomplished it, and had no mind to qualify my satisfaction by melancholy and romantic musings on my condition and the uncertainty of the future. This was possibly owing to the fineness of the weather; a heavy black gale from the north would doubtless have given a very different turn to my humours.

The wind at dawn had weakened and come into the west. There was a strong swell—indeed there always is in this ocean—but the seas ran small. The sky looked like marble, with its broad spreadings of high white clouds and the veins of blue sky between. I wished to make all the northing that was possible, but there was nothing to be done in that way with the spritsail alone. Had not the capstan been frozen I should have tried to get the mainsail upon the ship, but without the aid of machinery I was helpless. So, with helm amidships,

the schooner drove languidly along with her head due east, lifting as ponderously as a line-of-battle ship to the floating launches of the high swell, and the albatross hung as steadfastly in the wake of my lonely ocean path as though it had been some messenger sent by God to watch me into safety.

CHAPTER X.

I ENCOUNTER A WHALER.

I HAD been six days and nights at sea, and the morning of the seventh day had come. With the exception of one day of strong south-westerly winds, which ran me something to the northwards, the weather had been fine, bitterly cold indeed, but bright and clear. In this time I had run a distance of about six hundred and fifty miles to the east, and with no other cloths upon the schooner than her spritsail.

I confess, as the hours passed away and nothing hove into view, I grew dispirited and restless ; but, on the other hand, I was comforted by the bright weather and the favourable winds, and particularly by the vessel's steering herself, which enabled me to get rest, to keep myself warm with the fire, and to dress my food, yet ever pushing onwards (how-

ever slowly) into the navigated regions of this sea.

On the morning of the seventh day I came on deck, having slept since four o'clock. The wind was icy keen, pretty brisk, about west by south; the movement in the sea was from the south, and rolled very grandly; there was a fog that way, too, that hid the horizon, bringing the ocean-line to within a league of the schooner; but the other quarters swept in a dark, clear, blue line against the sky, and there was such a clarity of atmosphere as made the distances appear infinite.

I went below and lighted the fire and got my breakfast, all very leisurely, and when I was done I sat down and smoked a pipe. It was so keen on deck that I had no mind to leave the fire, and, as all was well, I lounged through the best part of two hours in the cook-house, when, thinking it was now time to take another survey of the scene I went on deck.

On looking over the larboard bulwark rail, the first thing I saw was a ship about two miles off. She was on the larboard tack, under courses, top-sails, and main-topgallant sail, heading as if to

cross my bows. The sunshine made her canvas look as white as snow against the skirts of the body of vapour that had trailed a little to leeward of her, and her black hull flashed as though she discharged a broadside every time she rose wet to the northern glory out of the hollow of the swell with a curl of silver at her cutwater.

My heart came into my throat; I seemed not to breathe; not to have saved my life could I have uttered a cry, so amazed and transported was I by this unexpected apparition. I stared like one in a dream, and my head felt as if all the blood in my body had surged into it. But then, all on a sudden, there happened a revulsion of feeling. Suppose she should prove a privateer—a French war-vessel—of a nation hostile to my own? Thought so wrought in me that I trembled like an idiot in a fright. The telescope was too weak to resolve her, I could do better with my eyes; and I stood at the bulwarks gazing and gazing as if she were the spectre ship of the Scandinavian legend.

There were flags below and I could have hoisted a signal of distress: but to what purpose?

If the appearance of the schooner did not sufficiently illustrate her condition, there was certainly no virtue in the language and declarations of bunting to exceed her own mute assurance. I watched her with a passion of anxiety, never doubting her intention to speak to me, at all events to draw close and look at me, wholly concerning myself with her character. The swell made us both dance, and the blue brows of the rollers would often hide her to the height of her rails ; but we were closing each other middling fast she travelling at seven and I at four miles in the hour, and presently I could see that she carried a number of boats.

A whaler, thought I ; and after a little I was sure of it by perceiving the rings over her top-gallant rigging for the look-out to stand in.

On being convinced of this, I ran below for a shawl that was in my cabin, and, jumping on to the bulwarks, stood flourishing it for some minutes to let them know that there was a man aboard. She luffed to deaden her way, that I might swim close, and as we approached each other I observed a crowd of heads forward

looking at me, and several men aft, all staring intently.

A man scrambled on to the rail, and with an arm claspings a backstay hailed me:

"Schooner ahoy!" he bawled, with a strong nasal twang in his cry. "What ship's that?"

"The *Boca del Dragon*," I shouted back.

"Where are you from, and where are you bound to?"

"I have been locked up in the ice," I cried, "and am in want of help. What ship are you?"

"The *Susan Tucker*, whaler, of New Bedford, twenty-seven months out," he returned. "Where in creation got you that hooker?"

"I'm the only man aboard," I cried, "and have no boat. Send to me, in the name of God, and let the master come!"

He waved his hand, bawling, "Put your helm down—you're forging ahead!" and so saying, dismounted.

I immediately cast the tiller adrift, put it hard over, and secured it, then jumped on to the bulwarks again to watch them. She was Yankee

beyond doubt ; I had rather met my own countrymen ; but, next to a British, I would have chosen an American ship to meet. Somehow, despite the Frenchman, I felt to have been alone throughout my adventure ; and so sore was the effect of that solitude upon my spirits that it seemed twenty years since I had seen a ship, and since I had held commune with my own species. I was terribly agitated, and shook in every limb. Life must have been precious always ; but never before had it appeared so precious as now, whilst I gazed at that homely ship, with her main-topsail to the mast, swinging stately upon the swell, the faces of the seamen plain, the smoke of her galley-fire breaking from the chimney, the sounds of creaking blocks and groaning parrels stealing from her. Such a fountain of joy broke out of my heart that my whole being was flooded with it, and had that mood lasted I believe I should have exposed the treasure in the run, and invited all the men of the whaler to share in it with me.

They stared fixedly ; little wonder that they

should be astounded by such an appearance as my ship exhibited. One of the several boats which hung at her davits was lowered, the oars flashed, and presently she was near enough to be hit with a biscuit; but when there the master, as I supposed him to be, who was steering, sung out, "'Vast rowing!" the boat came to a stand, and her people to a man stared at me with their chins upon their shoulders as if I had been a fiend. It was plain as a pikestaff that they were frightened, and that the superstitions of the fore-castle were hard at work in them whilst they viewed me. They looked a queer company: two were negroes, the others pale-faced bearded men, wrapped up in clothes to the aspect of scarecrows. The fellow who steered had a face as long as a wet hammock, and it was lengthened yet to the eye by a beard like a goat's hanging at the extremity of his chin.

He stood up—a tall, lank figure, with legs like a pair of compasses—and hailed me afresh, but the high swell, regular as the swing of a pendulum, interposed its brow between him and me, so that at one moment he was a sharply-lined figure

against the sky of the horizon, and the next he and his boat and crew were sheer gone out of sight, and this made an exchange of sentences slow and troublesome.

"Say, master," he sung out, "what d'ye say the schooner's name is?"

"The *Boca del Dragon*," I replied.

"And who are *you*, matey?"

"An English sailor who has been cast away on an island of ice," I answered, talking very shortly that the replies might follow the questions before the swell sank him.

"Ay, ay," says he, "that's very well; but *when* was you cast away, bully?"

I gave him the date.

"That's not a month ago," cried he.

"It's long enough, whatever the time," said I.

Here the crew fell a-talking, turning from one another to stare at me, and the negroes' eyes showed as big as saucers in the dismay of their regard.

"See, here, master," sung out the long man, "if you han't been cast away more than a month,

how come you clothed as men went dressed a century sin', hey?"

The reason of their misgivings flashed upon me. It was not so much the schooner as my appearance. The truth was, my clothes having been wetted, I had ever since been wearing such thick garments as I met with in the cabin, keeping my legs warm with jackboots, and I had become so used to the garb that I forgot I had it on. You will judge, then, that I must have presented a figure very nicely calculated to excite the wonder and apprehension of a body of men whose superstitious instincts were already sufficiently fluttered by the appearance of the schooner, when I tell you that, in addition to the jackboots and a great fur cap, my costume was formed of a red plush waistcoat laced with silver, purple breeches, a coat of frieze with yellow braiding and huge cuffs, and the cloak that I had taken from the body of Mendoza.

"Captain," cried I, "if so be you are the captain, in the name of God and humanity come aboard, sir." Here I had to wait till he reap-

peared. "My story is an extraordinary one. You have nothing to fear. I am a plain English sailor; my ship was the *Laughing Mary*, bound in ballast from Callao to the Cape." Here I had to wait again. "Pray, sir, come aboard. There is nothing to fear. I am alone—in grievous distress, and in want of help. Pray come, sir!"

There was so little of the goblin in this appeal that it resolved him. The crew hung in the wind, but he addressed them peremptorily. I heard him damn them for a set of curs, and tell them that if they put him aboard they might lie off till he was ready to return, where they would be safe, as the devil could not swim; and presently they buckled to their oars again and the boat came alongside. The long man, watching his chance, sprang with great agility into the chains, and stepped on deck. I ran up to him and seized his hand with both mine.

"Sir," cried I, speaking with difficulty, so great was the tumult of my spirits and the joy and gratitude that swelled my heart, "I thank you a thousand times over for this visit. I am in the

most helpless condition that can be imagined. I am not astonished that you should have been startled by the appearance of this vessel and by the figure I make in these clothes, but, sir, you will be much more amazed when you have heard my story."

He eyed me steadfastly, examining me very earnestly from my boots to my cap, and then cast a glance around him before he made any reply to my address. He had the gauntness, sallowness of complexion, and deliberateness of manner peculiar to the people of New England. And though he was a very ugly, lank, uncouth man, I protest he was as fair in my sight as if he had been the ambrosial angel described by Milton.

"Well, cook my gizzard," he exclaimed presently, through his nose, and after another good look at me and along the decks and up aloft, "if this ain't mi-raculous, tew. Durned if we didn't take this hooker for some ghost ship riz from the sea, in charge of a merman rigged out to fit her age. Y' are all alone, air you?"

"All alone," said I.

"Broach me every barrel aboard if ever I see

sich a vessel," he cried, his astonishment rising with the searching glances he directed aloft and alow. "How old be she?"

"She was cast away in seventeen hundred and fifty-three," said I.

"Well, I'm durned. She's froze hard, sirree; I reckon she'll want a hot sun to thaw her. Split me, mister, if she ain't worth sailing home as a show-box."

I interrupted his ejaculations by asking him to step below, where we could sit warm whilst I related my story, and I asked him to invite his boat's crew into the cabin that I might regale them with a bowl of such liquor as I ventured to say had never passed their lips in this life. On this he went to the side, and, hailing the men, ordered all but one to step aboard and drink to the health of the lonesome sailor they had come across. The word "drink" acted like a charm; they instantly hauled upon the painter and brought the boat to the chains and tumbled over the side, one of the negroes remaining in her. They fell together in a body, and surveyed me and the ship with a hundred marks of astonishment.

"My lads," said I, "my rig is a strange one, but I'll explain all shortly. The clothes I was cast away in are below, and I'll show you them. I'm no spectre, but as real as you ; though I have gone through so much that, if I am not a ghost, it is no fault of old ocean, but owing to the mercy of God. My name is Paul Rodney, and I'm a native of London. You, sir," says I, addressing the long man, "are, I presume, the master of the *Susan Tucker* ?"

"At your service—Josiah Tucker is my name, and that ship is my wife Susan."

"Captain Tucker, and you, men, will you please step below," says I. "The weather promises fair ; I have much to tell, and there is that in the cabin which will give you patience to hear me."

I descended the companion-stairs, and they all followed, making the interior that had been so long silent ring with their heavy tread, whilst from time to time a gruff, hoarse whisper broke from one of them. But superstition lay strong upon their imagination, and they were awed and quiet. The daylight came down the hatch, but for all that the cabin was darksome.

I waited till the last man had entered, and then said, "Before we settle down to a bowl and a yarn, captain, I should like to show you this ship. It'll save me a deal of description and explanation if you will be pleased to take a view."

"Lead on, mister," said he ; "but we shall have to snap our eyelids and raise fire in that way, for durned if I, for one, can see in the dark."

I fetched three or four lanthorns, and, lighting the candles, distributed them among the men, and then, in a procession, headed by the captain and me, we made the rounds. I had half-cleared the arms-room, but there were weapons enough left, and they stared at them like yokels in a booth. I showed them the cook-house and the forecastle, where the deck was still littered with clothes, and chests, and hammocks ; and, after carrying them aft to the cabins, gave them a sight of the hold. I never saw men more amazed. They filled the vessel with their exclamations. They never offered to touch anything, being too much awed, but stepped about with their heads uncovered, as quietly as they could, as though

they had been in a crypt, and the influence of strange and terrifying memorials was upon them. I also showed them the clothes I had come away from the *Laughing Mary* in; and, that I might submit such an aspect to them as should touch their sympathies, I whipped off the cloak and put on my own pilot-cloth coat.

There being nothing more to see, I led them to the cook-room, and there brewed a great hearty bowl of brandy-punch, which I seasoned with lemon, sugar, and spices into as relishable a draught as my knowledge in that way could compass, and, giving every man a pannikin, bade him dip and welcome, myself first drinking to them with a brief speech, yet not so brief but that I broke down towards the close of it, and ended with a dry sob or two.

They would have been unworthy their country and their calling not to have been touched by my natural manifestation of emotion; besides, the brandy was an incomparably fine spirit, and the very perfume of the steaming bowl was sufficient to stimulate the kindly qualities of sailors who had

been locked up for months in a greasy old ship, with no diviner smells about than the stink of the try-works. The captain, standing up, called upon his men to drink to me, promising me that he was very glad to have fallen in with my schooner, and then, looking at the others, made a sign, whereupon they all fixed their eyes upon me and drank as one man, every one emptying his pot and inverting it as a proof, and fetching a rousing sigh of satisfaction.

This ceremony ended, I began my story, beginning with the loss of the *Laughing Mary*, and proceeding step by step. I told them of the dead body of Mendoza, but said nothing about the Frenchman and the mate, and the Portugal boatswain, lest I should make them afraid of the vessel, and so get no help to work her. As to acquainting them with my recovery of Tassard, after his stupor of eight-and-forty years, I should have been mute on that head in any case, for so extraordinary a relation could, from such people, have earned me but one of two opinions: either that I was mad and believed in an impossibility,

or that I was a rogue and dealt in magic, and to be vehemently shunned. Yet there were wonders enough in my story without this, and I recited it to a running commentary of all sorts of queer Yankee exclamations.

There were seven seamen and the captain and I made nine, and we pretty nearly filled the cook-room. 'Twas a scene to be handled by a Dutch brush. We were a shaggy company, in several kinds of rude attire, and the crimson light of the furnace, whose playing flames darted shadows through the steady light of the lanthorns, caused us to appear very wild. The mariners' eyes gleamed redly as their glances rove round the place, and, had you come suddenly among us, I believe you would have thought this band of pale, fire-touched, hairy men, with the one ebon visage among them, rendered the vessel a vast deal more ghostly than ever she could have shown when sailing along with me alone on board.

They were a good deal puzzled when I told them of the mines I had made and sprung in the ice. They reckoned the notion fine, but could

not conceive how I had, single-handed, broken out the powder-barrels, got them over the side, and fixed them.

"Why," said I, "'twas slow, heavy work, of course ; but a man who labours for his life will do marvellous things. It is like the jump of a hunted stag."

"True for you," says the captain. "A swim of two miles spends me in pleasin'; but I've swum eight mile to save my life, and stranded fresh as a new-hooked cod. What's your intentions, sir ?"

"To sail the schooner home," said I, "if I can get help. She's too good to abandon. She'll fetch money in England."

"Ay, as a show."

"Yes, and as a coalman. Rig her modernly, and carry your fore-castle deck into the head, captain, and she's a brave ship, fit for a Baltimore eye."

He stroked down the hair upon his chin.

"Dip, captain, dip, my lads ; there's enough of this to drown ye in the hold," said I, pointing to the bowl. "Come, this is a happy meeting for

me ; let it be a merry one. Captain, I drink to the *Susan Tucker*."

"Sir, your servant. Here's to your sweetheart, be she wife or maid. Bill, jump on deck and take a look round. See to the boat."

One of the men went out.

"Captain," said I, "you are a full ship?"

"That's so."

"Bound home?"

"Right away."

"You have men enough and to spare. Lend me three of your hands to help me to the Thames, and I'll repay you thus ; there should be near a hundred tons of wine and brandy, of exquisite vintage, and choice with age beyond language in the hold. Take what you will of that freight ; there'll be ten times the value of your lay in your pickings, modest as you may prove. Help yourself to the clothes in the cabin and forecastle ; they will turn to account. For the men you will spare, and who will volunteer to help me, this will be my undertaking : the ship and all that is in her to be sold on her arrival, and the proceeds

equally divided. Shall we call it a thousand pounds apiece? Captain, she's well found: her inventory would make a list as long as you; I'd name a bigger sum, but here she is, you shall overhaul her hold and judge for yourself."

I watched him anxiously. No man spoke, but every eye was upon him. He sat pulling down the hair on his chin, then, jumping up on a sudden and extending his hand, he cried, "Shake! it's a bargain, if the men 'll jine."

"I'll jiné!" exclaimed a man.

There was a pause.

"And me," said the negro.

I was glad of this, and looked earnestly at the others.

"Is she tight?" said a man.

"As a bottle," said I.

They fell silent again.

"Joe Wilkinson and Washington Cromwell—them two jines," said the captain. "Bullies, he wants a third. Don't speak all together."

The man named "Bill" at this moment returned to the cook-room, and reported all well above.

My offer was repeated to him, but he shook his head.

"This is the Horn, mates," said he. "There's a deal o' water 'tween this and the Thames. How do she sail?—no man knows."

"I want none but willing men," said I. "Americans make as good sailors as the English. What an English seaman can face any of you can. There is another negro in the boat. Will you let him step aboard, captain? He may join."

A man was sent to take his place. Presently he arrived, and I gave him a cup of punch.

"'Splain the business to him, sir," said the captain, filling his pannikin; "his name's Billy Pitt."

I did so; and when I told him that Washington Cromwell had offered, he instantly said, "All right, massa, I'll be ob yah."

This was exactly what I wanted, and had there been a third negro I'd have preferred him to the white man.

"But how are you going to navigate this craft

home with three men?" said the man "Bill" to me.

"There'll be four; we shall do. The fewer the more dollars, hey, Wilkinson?"

He grinned, and Cromwell broke into a ventral laugh.

They seemed very well satisfied, and so was I.

CHAPTER XI.

I STRIKE A BARGAIN WITH THE YANKEE.

THE captain put his cup down; the bowl was empty; I offered to brew another jorum, but he thanked me and said no, adding significantly that he would have no more *here*, by which he meant that he would brew for himself in his own ship anon. The drink had made him cheerful and good-natured. He recommended that we should go on deck and set about transhipping whilst the weather held, for he was an old hand in these seas and never trusted the sky longer than a quarter of an hour.

"This here list," says he, "wants remedying and that'll follow our easin' of the hold."

"Yes," said I, "and I should be mighty thankful if some of your men would see all clear aloft for me, that we might start with running rigging

that will travel, capstans that'll revolve, and sails that'll spread."

"Oh, we'll manage that for you," said he. "Tru-ly, she's been bad froze, very bad froze. Durned if ever I see a worse freeze."

So saying he called to "Bill," who seemed the principal man of the boat's crew, and gave him some directions, and immediately afterwards all the men entered the boat and rowed away to the ship.

Whilst they were absent I carried the captain into the hold and left him to overhaul it. I told him that all the spirits, provisions, and the like were in the hold and lazarette, which was true enough, wanting to keep him out of the run, though, thanks to the precaution I had taken, I was in no fear even if he should penetrate so deep aft. Before he came out five-and-twenty stout fellows arrived in four boats from the ship, and when we went on deck, we found them going the rounds of the vessel, scraping the guns to get a view of them, peering down the companion, overhauling the forecastle-well, as I call the hollow

beyond the fore-castle, and staring aloft with their faces full of grinning wonder. The captain sang out to them and they all mustered aft.

"Now, lads," said he, "there's a big job before you—a big job for Cape Horn, I mean; and you'll have to slip through it as if you was grease. When done there'll be a carouse, and I'll warrant ye all such a sup that the most romantic among ye'll never cast another pining thought in the direction o' your mother's milk."

Having delivered this preface, he divided the men into two gangs; one, under the boatswain, to attend to the rigging, clear the canvas of the ice, get the pumps and the capstans to work, and see all ready for getting sail on the schooner; the other, under the second mate, to get tackles aloft and break out the cargo, taking care to trim ship whilst so doing.

They fell to their several jobs with a will. 'Tis the habit of our countrymen to sneer at the Americans as sailors, affirming that if ever they win a battle at sea it is by the help of British renegades. But this I protest; after

witnessing the smartness of those Yankee whalers, I would sooner charge the English than the Americans with lubberliness came the nautical merits of the two nations ever before me to decide upon. They had the hatches open, tackles aloft, and men at work below whilst the mariners of other countries would have been standing looking on and "jawing" upon the course to be taken. Some overran the fabric aloft, clearing, cutting away, pounding, making the ice fly in storms; others sweated the capstans till they clanked; others fell to the pumps, working with hammers and kettles of boiling water. The wondrous old schooner was never busier, no, not in the heyday of her flag, when her guns were blazing and her people yelling.

I doubt whether even a man-of-war could have given this work the despatch the whaler furnished. She had eight boats and sixty men, and every boat was afloat and alongside us ready to carry what she could to the ship. I wished to help, but the captain would not let me do so; he kept me walking and talking, asking me scores of questions

about the schooner, and all so shrewd that, without appearing reserved, I professed to know little. The great show of clothes puzzled him. He also asked if the crucifix in the cabin was silver. I said I believed it was, fetched it, and asked him to accept it, saying if he would give me the smallest of his boats for it I should be very much obliged.

"Oh, yes," says he, "you can have a boat. The men would not sail with you without a boat;" and after weighing the crucifix without the least exhibition of veneration in his manner, he put it in his pocket, saying he knew a man who would give him a couple of hundred dollars for the thing on his telling him that the Pope had blessed it.

"Ay, but," says I, "how do you know the Pope has blessed it?"

"Then I'll bless it," cried he; "why, am I a cold Johnny-cake that my blessing ain't as good as another man's?"

I was glad I had hidden the black flag; I mean, that I had stowed it away in the cabin of the Frenchman after he was dead. The Yankee

needed but the sight to make his suspicions of the original character of the *Boca del Dragon* flame up ; and you may suppose that I was exceedingly anxious he should not be sure that the schooner had been a pirate, lest he might have been tempted to scrutinize her rather more closely than would have been agreeable to me.

He asked me if I had met with any money in her : and I answered evasively that in searching the dead man on the rocks, I had discovered a few pieces in his pocket, but that I had left them, being much too melancholy and convinced of my approaching end to meddle with such a useless commodity. From time to time he would quit me to go to the hatch and sing down orders to the second mate in the hold. How many casks he meant to take I did not know ; when he asked me how much I would give, I replied : " Leave me enough to keep me ballasted ; that will satisfy me."

The high swell demanded caution, but they managed wonderfully well. They never swung more than three casks into a boat, and with this cargo she would row away to the ship that lay

hove-to close, and the men in her hoisted the casks aboard.

The wind remained light till half-past three; it then freshened a bit. Though all hands had knocked off at noon to get dinner—and a fine meal I gave them of ham, tongue, beef, biscuits, wine, and brandy—by half-past three they had eased the hold of ten boatloads of casks, besides clearing out the whole of the clothes from the forecastle along with as much of the bedding as we did not require; and I began to think that my Yankee intended to leave me a clean ship to carry home, though I durst not remonstrate. Yet was my turn handsomely served too. The pumps had been cleared and tried, and found to work well, and—which was glad news to me—the well found dry. The running rigging had been overhauled, and it travelled handsomely. The sails had been loosed and hoisted and lowered again, and the canvas found in good condition. The jibboom had been run out, and the stays set up. The stock of fresh water had been examined and found plentiful, and the casks in the head brought out

and secured on the main deck. In short, the American boatswain had worked with the judgment and care of a master-rigger, of a great artist in ropes, booms, and sails, and the schooner was left to my hands as fit for any navigation as the whaler that rose and fell on our quarter.

But, as I have said, at half-past three in the afternoon, the breeze began to sit in dark curls upon the water, and there was evidence enough in the haziness in the west, and in the loom of the shoulders of vapour in the dark-blue obscure there, to warrant a sackful for this capful presently.

"I reckon," says the captain to me, after looking into the west, "that we'd best knock off now. There's snow and wind yonder, and we'd better see all snug while there's time."

He called to one of the men to tell the second mate to come up from below and get the hatches on, and bringing me to the rail, he pointed to a boat, and asked if that would do? I said yes, and thanked him heartily for the gift, which was handsome, I must say, the boat being a very good one,

though, to be sure, he had got many times its value out of the schooner; and a party of men were forthwith told off to get the boat hoisted and stowed.

"Now, Mr. Rodney," said the captain, standing in the gangway, "how can I serve you further?"

"Sir," said I, "you are very obliging. Two things I stand sadly in need of: a chart of these waters and a chronometer."

"I'll send you a chart," said he, "that'll carry you as high as San Roque; but I've only got one chronometer, sir, and can't spare him."

"Well then," said I, "if, when you get aboard, you'll give me the time by your chronometer, I'll set my watch by it; but I'll thank you very much for the chart. The tracings below are as shapeless as the moon setting in a fog."

"You shall have the chart," said he, and then called to Wilkinson and the two negroes.

"Lads," said he, "you're quite content, I hope?" They answered "Yes."

"You've all three a claim upon me for the amount of what's owing ye," said he, "and when

you turn up at New Bedford you shall have it—that's square. I see fifteen hundred dollars a man on this job, if so be as ye don't broach too thirstily as you go along. Mr. Rodney, Joe here's a steady, 'spectable man, and'll make you a good mate. Cromwell and Billy Pitt are black only in their hides; all else's as good as white."

He then shook me by the hand, and, calling a farewell to Wilkinson and the negroes, scrambled into the chains and dropped into his boat, very highly satisfied, I make no doubt, with the business he had done that day.

A boat's crew were left behind to help us to make sail. But the weather looking somewhat wild in the west with the red light of the sun among the clouds there, and the dark heave of the swell running into a sickly crimson under the sun and then glowing out dusky again, I got them to treble-reef the mainsail and hoist it, and then thanking them, advised them to be off. Then, putting Cromwell to the tiller, I went forward with the others and set the topsail and forestaysail (the

spritsail lying furled), which would be show enough of canvas till I saw what the weather was to be like. I kept the topsail aback, waiting for a boat to arrive with my chart, and in a few minutes the boat we had cheered returned with what I wanted.

Meanwhile they were shortening sail on the whaler, and though she was no beauty, yet, I tell you, I found her as picturesque as any ship I had ever beheld as she lay with her main topgallant-sail clewed up, her topsail yards on the caps, and the heads of men knotting the reef-points showing black over the white cloths, her hull floating up out of the hollow and flinging a wet orange gleam to the west, a tumble of creamy foam about her to her rolling, shadows like the passage of phantom hands hurrying over her sails to the swaying of her masts, and the swelling sea darkling from her into the east.

I hollowed my hands, and, hailing the captain, who was on the quarter-deck, asked him for the time by his chronometer. He flourished his arm and disappeared and, presently returning, shouted

to know if I was ready. I put the key in my watch and answered yes, and then he gave me the time. My watch, though antique, was a noble piece of mechanism, and I have little doubt, as trustworthy as his chronometer. But I was careful to let it lie snug in my hand. I did not want the negro at the tiller nor the others to see it. They would wonder that so fine a jewelled piece as this should be in the possession of the second mate of a little brig, and it was my business to manage that they never should have cause to wonder at anything in that way.

The dusk of the evening came quick out of the east, and the wind freshened with a long cry in our rigging as if the eastern darkness was a foe it was rushing out of the west to meet. I brought the schooner north-north-east by my compass and watched her behaviour anxiously. The swell was on the quarter, and the wind and sea a trifle abaft the larboard beam; she leaned a little to the weight of her clothes, but was surprisingly stiff considering how light she was. Wilkinson and the negro came and stood by my side. The sea broke

heavily from the weather bow, and the water roared white under the lee bends and spread astern in a broad wake of foam. The whaler did not brace his yards up till after we had started, and now hung a pale faint mass in the windy darkness on the quarter. A tincture of rusty red hovered like smoke coloured by the furnace that produces it, in the west, but the night had drawn down quick and dark; the washing noise of the water was sharp, the wind piercingly cold; each sweep of the schooner's masts to windward was followed by a dull roaring of the blast rushing out of the hollows of the canvas, and she swung to the seas with wild yaws, but with regularity sufficient to prove the strict government of the helm.

But it was being at sea! homeward bound too! There was no wish of mine, engendered by my hideous loneliness on the ice, by my abhorred association with the Frenchman, that I could not refer to as, down to this moment, gratified. My heart bounded; my spirits could not have been higher had this ocean been the Thames, and

yonder dark flowing hills of water the banks of Erith and the Gravesend shore.

I turned to the three men: "My lads," said I, "you prove yourselves fine bold fellows by thus volunteering. Do not fear: if God guides us home—to my home, I mean—you shall find a handsome account in this business."

"Six more chaps would have jined had th'ole man bin willin'," said Wilkinson. "But best as it is, master, though she's a trifle short-handed."

"Why, yes," said I; "but being fore and aft, you know! It isn't as if we'd got courses to hand and topsails to reef."

"Ay, ay, dat's de troof," cried Billy Pitt. "I tort o' dat. Fore an' aft makes de difference. Don't guess I should hab volunteer had she been a brig."

"There are four of us," said I. "You're my chief mate, Wilkinson. Choose your watch."

"I choose Cromwell," said he; "he was in my watch aboard the whaler."

"Very well," I exclaimed; and this being

settled, and both negroes declaring themselves good cooks, we arranged that they should alternately have the dressing of our victuals, that Wilkinson should have the cabin next mine, and the negroes the one in which the Frenchman had slept, one taking the other's place as he was relieved.

I asked Wilkinson what he thought of the schooner. He answered that he was watching her.

"There's nothing to find fault with yet," said he; "she's a whale at rolling, sartinly. I guess she walks, though. I reckon she's had enough of the sea, like me, and's got the scent o' the land in her nose. I guess old Noah wasn't far off when her lines was laid. Mebbe his sons had the building of her. There's something scriptural in her cut. How old's she, master?"

"Fifty years and more," said I.

"Dere's nuffin' pertickler in dat," cried Cromwell. "I knows a wessel dat am a hundred an' four year old, s'elp me as I stand."

"I don't know how the whaler's heading," said

I, "but this schooner's a canoe if we aren't dropping her!"

Indeed she was scarce visible astern, a mere windy flicker hovering upon the pale flashings of the foam. It might be perhaps that the whaler was making a more northerly course than we, and under very snug canvas, though ours was snug enough, too; but be this as it may, I was mighty pleased with the slipping qualities of the schooner. I never could have dreamt that so odd and ugly a figure of a ship would show such heels. But I think this: we are too prone to view the handiwork of our sires with contempt. I do not know but that their ships were as fast as ours. They made many good passages. They might have proved themselves fleeter navigators had they had the sextant and chronometer to help them along. Fifty years hence perhaps mankind will be laughing at our crudities; at us, by heaven, who flatter ourselves that the art of ship-building and navigation will never be carried higher than the pitch to which we have raised them!

Cromwell being at the tiller, I told Billy Pitt to

go below and get supper, instructing him what to dress and how much to melt for a bowl, for as you know there was nothing but spirits and wine to season our repasts with. I saw Cromwell grin widely into the binnacle candle flame when he heard me talk of ham, tongue, sweetmeats, marmalade and the like for supper, together with a can of hot claret, and knowing sailor's nature middling well, I did not doubt that the fare of the schooner would bring the three men more into love with the adventure than even the reward that was to follow it.

I had noticed that the bundles which had been sent from the whaler as belonging to the poor fellows were meagre enough and showed indeed like the end of a long voyage, and I detained Billy Pitt a minute whilst I told them that there was a handsome stock of clothes in the cabins, together with linen, boots, and other articles of that sort; that, though the coats, breeches, and waistcoats were of bright colour and old-fashioned, they would keep them as warm as if they had been cut by a tailor of to-day.

“These things,” said I, “you can wear at sea, keeping your own clothes ready to slip on should we be spoken or to wear when we arrive in England. To-morrow they shall be divided among you, and they will become your property. The suit you saw me in to-day is all that I shall need.”

Both negroes burst into a most diverting laugh of joy on hearing this. Nothing delights a black man more than coloured apparel. They had seen the clothes in the fore-castle and guessed the kind of garments I meant to present them with.

Whilst supper was getting, I walked the deck with Wilkinson, both of us keeping a bright look-out, for it was blowing fresh; the darkness lay thick about us, there might be ice near us, and the schooner was storming under her reefed main-sail, topsail, and staysail through the hollow seas, thundering with a great roaring seething noise into the trough, and lifting to the foaming slope with her masts wildly aslant. I talked to my companion very freely, being anxious to find out

what kind of person he was, and I must say that there was something in his conversation that impressed me very favourably. He told me that he had a wife at New Bedford, that he was heartily sick of the sea, and that he hoped the money he would get by this adventure, added to his *lay*, would enable him to set up for himself ashore.

"Well," said I, "we will see to-morrow what cargo Captain Tucker has left us. But that you may be under no misapprehension, Wilkinson, if we are fortunate enough to bring the ship safely to England, I will enter into a bond to pay you five hundred pounds sterling for your share one week after the date of our arrival."

He answered that if he could get that sum he would be a made man for life. "But it's too much to expect, sir," says he.

I told him that he had no idea of the value of the cargo. The wines and spirits were of such a quality I would stake my interest in the schooner in their fetching a large sum of money.

"That'll depend," said he, "on how much the capt'n left us."

“He helped himself freely,” I answered, “but we are well off too. You shall judge to-morrow. Then there’s the schooner—as she stands: besides a noble stock of stores of all kinds, sails, ropes, tools, ammunition and several chests of small arms. I tell you I will give you five hundred pounds for your share.”

His satisfaction was expressed by his silence.

“But,” continued I, “we must act with judgment. What we have we must keep. Are the negroes trustworthy men?”

“Yes, they are honest fellows. I wouldn’t have shipped with them else.”

“We shall not require much for ourselves,” said I, “and the rest we’ll batten down and keep snug. There’ll be some manœuvring needed in order to come off clear with this booty when we arrive: but there’s plenty of time to think that over, and our business till then is to look after the ship and pray for luck to keep clear of anything hostile.”

And then we fell to other talk; in the course of which he told me he was an Englishman born,

but having been pressed into a man-o-war, deserted her at Halifax and made several voyages in American ships. He was wrecked on the Peruvian coast and became a beachcomber, and then got a berth in a whaler. He married at New Bedford and sailed with Captain Tucker—this was his second whaling trip, he said, and he wanted no more. I told him I was glad to learn that he was a countryman of mine, but not surprised. His speech was well-larded with americanisms, “but,” said I, “the true twang is wanting, and,” added I, laughing, “I should know you for Hampshire for all your reckons and guesses if I had to eat you should I be mistaken.”

“The press-gang’s the best friend the Yankees has,” said he a little sheepishly. “Do any man suppose I hadn’t sooner hail from my native town Southampton than from New Bedford? Half the American foksles is made up of Yankees who’d prove hearts of oak if it wasn’t for the press.”

His candour gratified me as showing that he already looked upon me as a shipmate to be

trusted, and, as I have said, this first chat with the man left me strongly disposed to consider myself fortunate in having him as an associate.

CHAPTER XII.

I VALUE THE LADING.

THE day had been so full of business, there had been so much to engage my mind, that it was not until I was seated at supper in the old cook-room in which I had passed so many melancholy hours, that I found myself able to take a calm survey of my situation, and to compare the various motions of my fortunes. I could scarcely indeed believe that I was not in a dream from which I should awake presently, and discover myself still securely imprisoned in the ice, and all those passages of the powder-blasts, the liberation of the schooner, my lonely days in her afloat, my encounter with the whaler, as visionary and vanishing as those dusky forms of vapour which had swarmed in giant-shape over my little open boat.

But even if confirmation had been wanting in

the sable visage of Billy Pitt, who sat near the furnace munching away with prodigious enjoyment of his food and bringing his can of hot spiced wine from his vast blubber lips with a mighty sigh of deep delight, I must have found it in each hissing leap and roaring plunge of the old piratical bucket, so full of the vitality of the wind-swollen canvas, so quick with all the life-instincts of a vessel storming through the deep with buoyant keel and under full control. Oh, heaven! how different from the dull ambling of the morning, the sluggish pitching and rolling to the weak pulling of the spritsail!

Wilkinson and Cromwell kept the deck whilst Billy Pitt and I got our supper, and I had some talk with my negro, who seemed to be a very simple childish fellow, heartily in love with his stomach and very eager to see England. He told me that he had heard it was a fine country, and his wish to see it was one reason of his volunteering.

“Dey say,” said he, “dat Lunnon’s a very fine place, sah, bigger dan Philadelphy, and dat a man’s skin don’ tell agin him among de yaller gals dere.”

I laughed and said, that in my country people were judged rather by the colour of their hearts than by the hue of their faces.

"But dollars count for something too, sah, I spects?" said he.

"Why, yes," said I, "with dollars enough you can make black white in England."

"Hum!" cried he, scratching his head. "I guess it 'ud take an almighty load of dollars to make me white, massa."

"Put money in your pocket and chink it," said I, "and your face'll be found white enough, I warrant."

"By golly!" cried he, "I'll do it den. S'elp me de Lord, massa, I'd chink twenty year for a white face. Dat comes ob bein' civilized. Tell'ee what dey dew, massa, dey makes you feel like a white man, but dey lets you keep black, blast 'em!"

I checked his excitement by telling him that in my country he would find that the negro was a person held in very high esteem, that the women in particular valued him for that very dinginess which the Americans found distasteful, and told

him that I could name several ladies of quality who had married their black servants.

He looked surprised, but not incredulous, and said in his peculiar dialect that he had no doubt I spoke the truth, as he had always heard that England was a fine country to live in. I then led him insensibly from this topic to talk of the sea and his experiences, and found that he had seen a very great deal, having been freed when young, and keeping to the ocean ever since in many different sorts of craft. Indeed, I was as much pleased with him as with Wilkinson, but then I had foreseen a simplicity in both the negroes, and in expectation of finding this quality, so useful to one in my strange position, I was overjoyed when they consented to help me sail the schooner to the Thames.

We went on deck to relieve Wilkinson and Cromwell. Billy Pitt took the tiller and I walked to either rail and stared into the darkness. It was very thick with occasional squalls of snow, which put a screaming as of tortured cats into the wind as they swung through it. The sea was high, but the schooner was making excellent weather of it, whilst she rolled and pitched through

the troubled darkness at seven knots in the hour. 'Twas noble useful sailing, yet a speed not to be relished in these waters amid so deep a shadow. Still the temptation to "hold on all," as we say, was very great; every mile carried us by so much nearer to the temperate parallels, and shortened to that extent the long, long passage that lay before us.

I was pacing the deck briskly, for the wind was horribly keen, when Pitt suddenly called out, "I say, massa!"

"Hullo," I replied.

"Sah," he cried, "I smell ice!"

I knew that this was a capacity not uncommon among men who had voyaged much in the frosty regions of the deep, and instantly exclaimed, "Luff, then, luff! shake the way out of her!" sniffing as I spoke, but detecting no added shrewdness in the air that was already freezingly cold. He put the helm down, and I called to the others below to come on deck and flatten in the main sheet. They were up in a trice and tailed on with me, asking no questions, till we had the boom nearly amidships.

I was about to speak when Wilkinson cried out, "I smell ice." He sniffed a moment: "Yes, there's an island aboard. Anybody see it?"

"Ay, dere it am, sure enough!" cried Cromwell. "Dere—on de lee-bow—see it, sah? See it, Billy?"

Yes, I saw it plain enough when I knew where to look for it. 'Twas just such another lump of faintness as had wrecked the *Laughing Mary*, a mass of dull spectral light upon the throbbing blackness, and it lay exactly in a line with the course we had been steering when Pitt first called out, so that assuredly we had not shifted our helm a minute too soon. We chopped and wallowed past it slowly, keeping a sharp look-out for like apparitions in other quarters, and when it had disappeared, I made up my mind to heave the schooner to and keep her in that posture till daylight, unless the night cleared. So we got the mainsail down and stowed it, clewed up the top-sail (which I lent a hand to roll up), and let the vessel lie under a reefed foresail with her helm lashed. The weather, however, must have ultimately compelled what the thickness had

required; for by ten o'clock it was blowing a hard gale, with a frequent hoariness of clouds of snow upon the blackness, the seas very high and foaming, and the wind crying madly in the rigging.

I let some time go by, and then sounded the well and found no more water than the depth at which the pumps sucked. This did wonders in the way of reassuring the men, who were rendered uneasy by the violent motions of the unwieldy vessel, and by the very harsh straining noises which rose out of the hold, which latter they would naturally attribute to the craziness of the fabric, though the true cause of it lay in the number of loose, movable bulkheads.

"It's amazin' to me that she holds together at all," cried Wilkinson, "so ancient she is!"

"She's only old," said I, "in the sound of the years she's been in existence. The ice has kept her young. Would the hams and tongues we're eating be taken to be half a century old? yet where could you buy sweeter and better meat of the kind ashore? A ship's well is your only honest reporter of her condition. Ours has vouched in a way that should keep you easy."

“Arter de *Soosan Tucker* dis is like bein’ hung up to dry,” exclaimed one of the negroes. “It war pump, pump dere and no mistake. I call dis a werry beautiful little sheep, massa ; yes, s’elp me de Lord, dere’s nuffin could persuade me she ain’t what I says she am.”

However, I was up and down a good deal during the night. But for the treasure I should have been less anxious, I dare say. I had come so successfully to this point that I was resolved, if my hopes were to miscarry, the misfortune should not be owing to want of vigilance on my part ; and there happened an incident which inevitably tended to sharpen my watchfulness, though I was perfectly conscious there was a million to one against its occurring a second time. I came on deck to relieve Wilkinson, at midnight, after a half-hour’s nodding doze by the furnace below. He went to his cabin ; I stood under the lee of a cloth seized in the weather main rigging. Pitt arrived, and I told him he could return to the cook-house and stay there till I called him. The helm being lashed, and the schooner doing very well, nothing wanted watching in particular, yet I would not

have the deck abandoned, and meant to keep a look-out, turn and turn about with Pitt, as Wilkinson and Cromwell had. The snow had ceased ; but it was very dark and thick, the ocean a roaring shadow, palpitating upon the eyes in rolling folds of blackness, with the quick expiring flash of foam to windward. On a sudden, looking over the weather quarter, methought I discerned a deeper shade in the night there than was elsewhere perceptible. It was like a great blot of ink upon the darkness. Even whilst I speculated, it drew out in the shape of a ship running before the gale. She seemed to be heading directly for us. The roof of my mouth turned dry as desert-sand ; my tongue and limbs refused their office ; I could neither cry nor stir, being indeed paralyzed by the terrible suddenness of that apparition and the imminence of our peril. It all happened whilst you could have told thirty. The great black mass surged up with the water boiling about the bows ; she brought a thunder along with her in her rigging and sails as she soared to the crowns of the seas she was sweeping before. I could not tell what canvas she was under, but

her speed was a full ten knots, and as I did not see her till she was close, she looked to come upon us as with a single bound. She passed us to windward within a stone's throw, and vanished like a dark cloud melting into the surrounding blackness. Not a gleam of light broke from her ; you heard nothing but the boiling at her bows and the thunderous pealing of the gale in her canvas. A quarter turn of the wheel would have sent us to the bottom, and her, no doubt, on top of us. Whether she was the *Susan Tucker*, or some other whaler, or a big South-Sea-man driven low and getting what easting she could out of the gale, I know not. She was as complete a mystery of the ocean night as any spectral fabric, and a heavier terror to me than a phantasm worked by ghosts could have proved.

I knew such a thing could not happen again, yet when I called Pitt I talked to him about it as though we must certainly be run down if he did not keep a sharp look-out, and when my watch below came round at four o'clock, I was so agitated that I was up and down till daybreak, as though my duty did not end till then.

The gale moderated at sunrise, and, though it was a gloomy, true Cape Horn morning, with dark driving clouds, the sea a dusky olive, very hollow, and frequent small quick squalls of sleet which brought the wind to us in sharp gusts, yet as we could see where we were going, I got the schooner before it, heading her east-north-east, and under a reefed topsail, mainsail, and staysail, the old bucket stormed through it with the sputter and rage of a line-of-battle ship. There was a log-reel and line on deck, and I found a sand-glass in the chest in my cabin in which I had met with the quadrants, perspective glass, and the like, and I kept this log regularly going, marking a point of departure on the chart the American captain had given me, which I afterwards found to be within two leagues and a half of the true position. But for three days the weather continued so heavy that there was nothing to be done in the shape of gratifying the men's expectations by overhauling what was left of the cargo. Indeed, we had no leisure for such work; all our waking hours had to be strictly dedicated to the schooner, and in keeping a look-out for ice. But the morning of the fourth day

broke with a fine sky and a brisk breeze from a little to the east of south, to which we showed every cloth the schooner had to throw abroad, and being now by dead reckoning within a few leagues of the meridian of sixty degrees, I shaped a course north by east by my compass, with the design of getting a view of Staten Island that I might correct my calculations.

When we had made sail and got our breakfast, I told Wilkinson and Cromwell (Pitt being at the tiller) that now was a good opportunity for inspecting the contents of the hold; and (not to be tedious in this part of my relation, however I may have sinned in this respect elsewhere) we carried lanthorns below, and spent the better part of the forenoon in taking stock. From a copy of the memorandum I made on that occasion (still in my possession), we discovered that the Yankee captain had left us the following: thirty casks of rum, twenty-eight hogsheads of claret, seventy-five casks of brandy, fifty of sherry, and eighteen cases of beer in bottles. In addition to this were the stores in the lazarette (besides a quantity of several kinds of wine in jars, &c.) elsewhere

enumerated, besides all the ship's furniture, her guns, powder, small-arms, &c., as well as the ship herself. I took the men into the run and showed them the chests, opening the little one which I had stocked with small-arms, and lifting the lids of two or three of the others. They were perfectly satisfied, fully believing all the chests to be filled with small-arms and nothing else, and so we came away and returned to the cabin, where, to please them, I put down the value of the cargo at a venture, setting figures against each article, and making out a total of two thousand six hundred and forty pounds. This of course included the ship.

"How much 'll dat be a man, massa?" asked Cromwell.

"Six hundred and sixty pounds," I answered.

The poor fellow was so transported that, after staring at me in silence with the corners of his mouth stretched to his ears, he tossed up his hands, burst into a roar of laughter, and made several skips about the deck.

"Of course," said I, addressing Wilkinson, "my figures may be ahead or short of the truth.

But if you are disposed to take the chance, I'll tell you what I'll do : I'll stand by my figures, accepting the risk of the value of the lading being less than what I say it is, and undertake to give each man of you six hundred and sixty pounds for your share."

" Well, sir," said he, " I don't know that I ought to object. But a few pounds is a matter of great consequence to me, and I reckon if these here goods and the wessel should turn out to be worth more than ye offer, the loss 'ud go agin the grit, ay, if 'twere twenty dollars a man."

I laughed, and told him to let the matter rest, there was plenty of time before us ; I should be willing to stand to my offer even if I lost by it, so heartily obliged was I to them for coming to my assistance. And in this I spoke the truth, though, as you will understand who know my position, I had to finesse. It went against my conscience to make out that the chests were full of small-arms, but I should have been mad to tell them the truth, and, perhaps, by the truth made devils of men who were, and promised to remain, steady, temperate, honest fellows. I was not governed

by the desire to keep all the treasure to myself ; no, I vow to God I should have been glad to give them a moiety of it, had I not apprehended the very gravest consequences if I were candid with them. But this, surely, must be so plain that it is idle to go on insisting on it.

The fine weather, the golden issue that was to attend our successful navigation, the satisfactory behaviour of the schooner, put us into a high good-humour with one another ; and when it came to my collecting all the clothes in the after cabins and distributing them among the three men, I thought Billy Pitt and Cromwell would have gone mad with delight. To the best of my recollection the apparel that had been left us by the American captain (who, as you know, had cleared the fore-castle of the clothes there) consisted of several coats of cut velvet, trimmed with gold and silver lace, some frocks of white drab with large plate buttons, brocade waistcoats of blue satin and green silk, crimson and other coloured cloth breeches, along with some cloaks, three-corner hats, black and white stockings, a number of ruffled shirts, and other articles, of which I recol-

lect the character, though my ignorance of the costumes of that period prevents me from naming them.

Any one acquainted with the negro's delight in coloured clothes will hardly need to be told of the extravagant joy raised in the black breasts of Cromwell and Pitt by my distribution of this fine attire. The lace, to be sure, was tarnished, and some of the colours faded, but all the same the apparel furnished a brave show; and such was the avidity with which the poor creatures snatched at the garments as I offered them first to one and then another, that I believe they would have been perfectly satisfied with the clothes alone as payment for their services. I made this distribution on the quarter-deck, or little poop, rather, that all might be present: Wilkinson was at the tiller, and appeared highly delighted with the bundle allotted him, saying that he might reckon upon a hearty welcome from his wife when she came to know what was in his chest. The negroes were wild to clothe themselves at once; I advised them to wait for the warm weather, but they were too impatient to put on their fine feathers to heed my

advice. They ran below, and were gone half an hour, during which time I have no doubt they put on all they had; and when at last they returned, their appearance was so exquisitely absurd that I laughed till I came near to suffocating. Each negro had tied a silver laced hat on to his woolly head; one wore a pair of crimson, the other a pair of black, velvet breeches; over their cucumber shanks they had drawn white silk stockings, regardless of the cold; their feet were encased in buckled shoes, and their costumes were completed by scarlet and blue waistcoats which fell to their knees, and crimson and blue coats with immense skirts. What struck me as most astonishing was their gravity. Their self-complacency was prodigious; they eyed each other with dignified approbation, and strutted with the air of provincial mayors and aldermen newly arrived from the presence of royalty.

"They're in keepin' with the schooner, any ways," said Wilkinson.

And so perhaps they were. The antique fabric needed the sparkle of those costumes on her deck to make her aspect fit in with the imaginations she

bred. But, as I had anticipated, the cold proved too powerful for their conceit, and they were presently glad to ship their more modern trousers, though they clung obstinately to their waistcoats, and could not be persuaded to remove their hats on any account whatever.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR PROGRESS TO THE CHANNEL.

WHEN I started to relate my adventure I never designed to write an account of the journey home at large. On the contrary, I foresaw that, by the time I had arrived at this part, you would have had enough of the sea. Let me now, then, be as brief as possible.

The melting of the ice and the slowly increasing power of the sun were inexpressibly consoling to me who had had so much of the cold that I do protest if Elysium were bleak, no matter how radiant, and the abode of the fiends as hot as it is pictured, I would choose to turn my back upon the angels. I cannot say, however, that the schooner was properly thawed until we were hard

upon the parallels of the Falkland Islands ; she then showed her timbers naked to the sun, and exposed a brown solid deck rendered ugly by several dark patches which, scrape as we might, we could not obliterate. We struck the guns into the hold for the better ballasting of the vessel, got studding-sail booms aloft, overhauled her suits of canvas and found a great square sail which proved of inestimable importance in light winds and in running. After the ice was wholly melted out of her frame she made a little water, yet not so much but that half an hour's spell at the pump twice a day easily freed her. But, curiously enough, at the end of a fortnight she became tight again, which I attribute to the swelling of her timbers.

We were a slender company, but we managed extraordinarily well. The men were wonderfully content ; I never heard so much as a murmur escape one of them ; they never exceeded their rations nor asked for a drop more of liquor than we had agreed among us should be served out. But, as I had anticipated, our security lay in our slenderness. We were too few for disaffec-

tion. The negroes were as simple as children, Wilkinson looked to find his account in a happy arrival, and if I was not, strictly speaking, their captain, I was their navigator without whom their case would have been as perilous as mine was on the ice.

Outside the natural dangers of the sea we had but one anxiety, and that concerned our being chased and taken. This fear was heartily shared by my companions, to whom I also represented that it must be our business to give even the ships of our country a wide berth; for, though I had long since flung all the compromising bunting overboard, and destroyed all the papers I could come across, which, being written in a language I was ignorant of, might, for all I knew, contain some damning information, a British ship would be sure to board us and I should have to tell the truth or take the risks of prevaricating. If I told the truth, then I should have to admit that the lading of the vessel was piratical plunder; and though I knew not how the law stood with regard to booty rescued from certain destruction after the lapse of half a century, yet it was

a hundred to one that the whole would be claimed in the king's name under a talk of restitution, which signified that we should never hear more of it. On the other hand prevarication would not fail to excite suspicion, and on our not being able to satisfactorily account for our possession of the ship and what was in her, it might end in our actually being seized as pirates and perhaps executed.

This reasoning went very well with the men and filled them with such anxiety that they were for ever on the look-out for a sail. But, as you may guess, my own solicitude sank very much deeper; for, supposing the schooner to be rummaged by an English crew, it was as certain as that my hand was affixed to my arm that the chests of treasure would be transhipped and lost to me by the law's trickery.

Now, till we were to the north of the equator we sighted nothing; no, in all those days not a single sail ever hove into view to break the melancholy continuity of the sea-line. But between the parallels of 12° and 22° N. we met

with no less than eight ships, the nearest within a league. We watched them as cats watch mice ; making a point to bear away if they were going our road, or, if they were coming towards us, to shift our helm—but never very markedly—so as to let them pass us at the widest possible distance. Some of them showed a colour, but we never answered their signals. That they were all harmless traders I will not affirm ; but none of them offered to chase us. Yet could I have been sure of a ship, I should have been glad to speak. My longitude was little more than guess-work ; my latitude not very certain ; and my compass was out. However, I supported my own and the spirits of my little company by telling them of the early navigators ; how Columbus, Candish, Drake, Schouten and other heroic marine worthies of distant times had navigated the globe, discovered new worlds, penetrated into the most secret solitudes of the deep without any notion of longitude and with no better instruments to take the sun's height than the forestaff and astrolabe. We were better off than they, and I

had not the least doubt, I told them, of bringing the old schooner to a safe berth off Deal or Gravesend.

But it happened that we were chased when on the polar verge of the North-East Trade-wind. It was blowing brisk, the sea breaking in snow upon the weather bow, the sky overcast with clouds, and the schooner washing through it under a single-reefed mainsail and whole topsail. It was noon: I was taking an observation, when Pitt at the tiller sang out "Sail ho!" and looking, I spied the swelling cloud-like canvas of a vessel on a line with our starboard cathead. I told Pitt to let the schooner fall off three points, and with slackened sheets the old *Boca del Dragon* hummed through it brilliantly, flinging the foam as far aft as the gangway. The strange sail rose rapidly, and the lifting of her hull discovered her to be a line-of-battle ship. We held on as we were, hoping to escape her notice; but whether she did not like our appearance, or that there was something in the figure we cut that excited her curiosity, she, on a sudden, put her helm up and steered a true course for us.

At the first sight of her I had called Wilkinson and Cromwell on deck, and I now cried out, "Lads, d'ye see, she's after us. If she catches us our dream of dollars is over. Lively now, boys, and give her all she can stagger under ; and what she can't carry she must drag." And we sprang to make sail, briskly as apes, and every one working with two-man power. I knew the old *Boca's* best point ; it was with the wind a point abaft the beam ; we put her to that, got the great square-sail on her, shook out all reefs, and gave all she had to the wind. The wake roared away from her like a white torrent that flies from the foot of a foaming cataract. She had the pirate's instincts, and being put to her trumps, was nimble. God ! how she did swing through it ! Never had I driven the aged bucket before like this, and I understood that speed at sea is not irreconcilable with odd bodies. But the great ship to windward hung steady ; a cloud of bland and swelling cloths. When we had set the studding-sail we had nothing more to fly with ; and so we stood looking. She slapped six shots at us, one after another, as a haughty hint to us to stop ; but we meant to

escape, and at last we did, outsailing her by thirteen inches to her foot—one foot to her twelve—though she stuck to our skirts the whole afternoon and kept us in an agony of anxiety.

The sun was setting when she abandoned us: she was then some five or six miles distant on our weather quarter. What her nation was I did not know; but Wilkinson reckoned her French when she gave us up. We rushed steadily along the same course into the darkness of the night and then, shortening sail, brought the schooner to the wind again, after which we drank to the frisky old jade in an honestly-earned bowl.

It was on the 5th of December that we sighted the Scilly Isles. I guessed what that land was, but so vague had been my navigation that I durst not be sure; until, spying a smack with her nets over, I steered for her and got the information I needed from her people. They answered us with an air of fear, and in truth the fellows had reason; for, besides the singular appearance of the ship, the four of us were apparelled in odds and ends of the antique clothes, and I have little doubt

they considered us lunatics of another country, who had run away with a ship belonging to parts where the tastes and fashions were behind the age.

Now, as you may suppose, by this time I had settled my plans ; and as we sailed up channel, I unfolded them to my companions. I pointed out that before we entered the river it would be necessary to discharge our lading into some little vessel that would smuggle the booty ashore for us. The figure the schooner made was so peculiar she would inevitably attract attention ; she would instantly be boarded in the Thames on our coming to anchor, and, if I told the truth, she would be seized as a pirate, and ourselves dismissed with a small reward, and perhaps with nothing.

“ My scheme,” said I, “ is this : I have a relative in London to whom I shall communicate the news of my arrival and tell him my story. You, Wilkinson must be the bearer of this letter. He is a shrewd, active man, and I will leave it to him to engage the help we want. There is no lack of the right kind of serviceable men at Deal, and

if they are promised a substantial interest in smuggling our lading ashore, they will run the goods successfully, do not fear. As there is sure to be a man-of-war stationed in the Downs, we must keep clear of that anchorage. I will land you at Lydd, whence you will make your way to Dover and thence to London. Cromwell and Pitt will return and help me to keep cruising. My letter to my relative will tell him where to seek me, and I shall know his boat by her flying a jack. When we have discharged our lading we will sail to the Thames, and then let who will come aboard, for we shall have a clean hold. This," continued I, "is the best scheme I can devise. The risks of smuggling attend it, to be sure; but against those risks we have to put the certainty of our forfeiting our just claims to the property if we carry the schooner to the Thames. Even suppose, when there, that we should not be immediately visited, and so be provided with an opportunity to land our stuff—whom have we to trust? The Thames abounds with river thieves, with lumpers, scuffle-hunters, mud-larks, glutmen, rogues of all sorts, to hire whom would mean to

bribe them with the value of half the lading and to risk their stealing the other half. But this is the lesser difficulty; the main one lies in this: there are some sixteen hundred men employed in the London Custom House, most of whom are on river duty as watchmen; thirty of these people are clapped aboard an East Indiaman, five or six on West India ships, and a like proportion in other vessels. So strange a craft as ours would be visited, depend on 't, and smartly, too. D'ye see the danger, lads? What do you say, then, to my scheme?"

The negroes immediately answered that they left it to me; I knew best; they would be satisfied with whatever I did.

Wilkinson mused a while and then said, "Smuggling was risky work. How would it be if we represented that we had found the schooner washing about with nobody aboard?"

"The tale wouldn't be credited," said I. "The age of the vessel would tell against such a story, even if you removed all other evidence by throwing the clothes and small-arms overboard and whatever else might go to prove that

the schooner must have been floating about abandoned since the year 1750!"

"Musn't lose de clothes, massa, on no account," cried Pitt.

"Well, sir," says Wilkinson, after another spell of reflection, "I reckon you're right. If so be the law would seize the vessel and goods on the grounds that she had been a pirate and all that's in her was plunder, why, then, certainly, I don't see nothin' else but to make a smuggling job of it, as you say, sir."

This being settled (Wilkinson's concurrence being rendered the easier by my telling him that, providing the lading was safely run, I would adhere to my undertaking to give them six hundred and sixty pounds each for their share), I went below and spent half an hour over a letter to Mr. Jeremiah Mason. There was no ink, but I found a pencil, and for paper I used the fly-leaves of the books in my cabin. I opened with a sketch of my adventures, and then went on to relate that the *Boca* was a *rich ship*; that as she had been a pirate, I risked her seizure by carrying her to London;

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that I stood grievously in need of his counsel and help, and begged him not to lose a moment in returning with the messenger to Deal, and there hiring a boat and coming to me, whom he would find cruising off Beachy Head. That I might know his boat, I bade him fly a jack a little below the masthead. "As for the *Boca del Dragon*," I added, "Wilkinson would recognize her if she were in the middle of a thousand sail, and indeed a farmer's boy would be able to distinguish her for her uncommon oddness of figure." I was satisfied to underscore the words "a rich ship," quite certain his imagination would be sufficiently fired by the expression. At anything further I durst not hint, as the letter would be open for Wilkinson to read.

When I had finished, I took a lanthorn and the keys of the chest and went very secretly and expeditiously to the run, and removing the layers of small-arms from the top of the case that held the money, I picked out some English pieces, quickly returned the small-arms, locked the chest, and returned.

All this time we were running up Channel before

a fresh westerly wind. It was true December weather, very raw, and the horizon thick, but I knew my road well, and whilst the loom of the land showed, I desired nothing better than this thickness.

But wary sailing delayed us; and it was not till ten o'clock on the night of the seventh that we hove the schooner to off the shingly beach of Lydd within sound of the wash of the sea upon it. The bay sheltered us; we got the boat over; I gave Wilkinson the letter and ten guineas, bidding him keep them hidden and to use them cautiously with the silver change he would receive, for they were all guineas of the first George and might excite comment if he, a poor sailor, ill-clad, should pull them out and exhibit them. Happily, in the hurry of the time, he did not think to ask me how I had come by them. He thrust them into his pocket, shook my hand and dropped into the boat, and the negroes immediately rowed him ashore.

I stood holding a lanthorn upon the rail to serve them as a guide, waiting for the boat to return, and never breathed more freely in my life

than when I heard the sound of oars. The two negroes came alongside, and, clapping the tackles on to the boat, we hoisted her with the capstan, and then under very small canvas stood out to sea again.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE END.

I SHOULD require to write to the length of this book over again to do full justice by description to the difficulties and anxieties of the days that now followed. If it had not been thick weather all the time, I do not know how I should have fared, I am sure. I was between two fires, so to say ; on the one side the French cruisers and privateers, and on the other side the ships of my own country, and particularly the revenue cutters and the sloops and the like cruising after the smugglers. As I knew that my relative could not be with me under four days, I steered out of sight of land into the middle of the Channel, betwixt Beachy Head and the Seine coast, and there dodged about under very small canvas, heartily grateful for the haze that shrouded the sea to within a

mile of me. I scarcely closed my eyes in sleep, and though my worries were now of a very different kind from those which had racked me on the ice, they were, in their way, to the full as tormenting. Every sail that loomed in the dinginess filled me with alarm. Several ships passed me close, and I could scarce breathe till they were out of sight. Indeed, I lay skulking out upon that sea as if I was some common thief broken loose from jail. However, it pleased heaven that I should manage to keep out of sight of those whom I most strenuously desired not to see; and the afternoon of the fourth day found the *Boca* lying off Beachy Head, and I peering over the rail, with a haggard face, at the dark shadow of the land.

It had been blowing and snowing all day. The seas ran short and spitefully. It was a dismal December afternoon, and the more sensibly disgusting to us who were fresh from several weeks of the balm and glory of the tropics. And yet I would not have exchanged it for a clear fine day for all that I was like to be worth.

It was the most reasonable thing in the world

that a vessel should be hove-to in such sombre weather, and so I was under no concern that our posture in this respect would excite suspicion, should we be descried. The hours stole away one by one. Now and again a little coaster would pass, some hoy bound west, a sloop for the Thames, a lugger on some unguessable mission : all small ships, oozing dark and damp out of the snow and mist and passing silently. I kept the land close aboard to be out of the way of the bigger craft, and held the vessel in the wind till it was necessary to reach to our station. The three of us were mighty pensive and eager, staring incessantly with all our eyes ; but it looked as if we were not to expect anything that day when the night put its darkness into the weather. Then, as I foresaw a serious danger if the wind shifted into the south, and as I could not obtain a glimpse of a shore-light, I resolved to bring up and ride till dawn. Long ago we had got the schooner's old anchors at the catheads and the cables bent, so, lowering the mainsail and hauling down the stay foresail, we let fall the starboard anchor, and the ship came to a stand. I put the lead over

the side that we might know if she dragged, hung a lantern on the forestay and one on either quarter that our presence might be marked by my relative should he be out in quest of us, and went below, leaving Cromwell to keep the look-out.

I was extremely fretful and anxious and had no patience to talk with Billy Pitt. There were too many risks, too many vague chances in this exploit to render contemplation of it tolerable. Suppose my relative should be dead? Suppose Wilkinson should be robbed of his money? fall to the cutting of capers, as a sailor newly delivered to the pleasures of the land with ten guineas in his pocket? Get locked up for breaking the peace? Blab of us in his cups and start the Customs on our trail? There was no end to such conjectures, and I made myself so melancholy that I was fool enough to think that the treasure was no better than a curse, and that on the whole I was better off on the ice than here with the anchor in English ground and my native soil within gunshot.

I was up and about till midnight, and then, being in the cabin and exhausted, I fell asleep

across the table, and in that posture lay as one dead. Some one dragging at my arm, with very little tenderness, awoke me. I was in the midst of a dream of the schooner having been boarded by a party of French privateersmen, with Tassard at their head, and the roughness with which I was aroused was exactly calculated to extend into my waking the horror and grief of my sleep.

I instantly sprang to my feet and saw Washington Cromwell.

"Massa Rodney," he bawled, "Massa Rodney, de gent's 'longside—him an' Wilkinson—yaas, by de good Lord—dey'se both dere! Dey hail me an' I answer and say who are you, and dey say are you de *Boca*? We am, I say, and dey say——"

I had stood stupidly staring at him, but my full understanding coming to me on a sudden, I jumped to the ladder and darted on deck. I heard voices over the starboard side and ran there. It was not so dark but that I could see the outline of a Deal lugger. Whilst I was peering, the voice of my man Wilkinson cried out, "On deck, there! Cromwell—Billy—where's Mr. Rodney?"

"Here I am!" cried I.

"My God, Paul!" exclaimed the voice of Mr. Mason, "this encounter is fortunate indeed."

I shouted to the negroes to show a light, and in a few minutes Mr. Mason, Wilkinson, and a couple of Deal boatmen came over the side. I grasped my relative by both hands. I had not seen him for four years.

"This is good of you, indeed!" I cried. "But you must be perished with the cold of that open boat. Come below at once—come Wilkinson, and you men—there's a fire in the cook-room and drink to warm us;" and down I bundled in the wildest condition of excitement, followed by Mason and the others.

My relative was warmly clad and did not seem to suffer from the cold. He took me by the hand and brought me to the lanthorn-light, and stood viewing me.

"Ay," said he, "you are your old self: a bit worried looking, but that'll pass. Stout and burnt. Odd's heart! Paul, if you have passed through the experiences Wilkinson has given me a sketch of, we must have your life, man, we must have your life—for the booksellers."

Well, I need not detain you by reciting all the civilities and congratulations which he and I exchanged. He and Wilkinson had arrived at Deal at three o'clock that afternoon, and, after a hurried meal, had hired a lugger and started at once for Beachy Head. It was now three o'clock in the morning; and what I may consider a truly extraordinary circumstance is, that they had sailed as true a course for the schooner as if she had lain plain to the gaze at the very start; that since the night had drawn down they had met no vessel of any kind or description, until they came up to us; that in all probability they would have run stem on into us if they had not seen our lights, and that their seeing our lights had caused them to hail us, their "ship ahoy!" being instantly answered by Cromwell.

"Well," said I, "there are stranger things to tell of than this, even. Now, Wilkinson, and you Billy, and Cromwell, get us a good supper and mix a proper bowl. How many more of you are in the lugger?"

"Four, sir," says one of the boatmen.

"Then fetch as many as may safely leave the

boat," said I. "Billy, get candles and make a good light here. Throw on coal, boys; there's enough to carry us home."

I saw Mason gazing curiously about him.

"'Tis like a tale out of the Arabian Nights, Paul," he exclaimed.

"Ay," said I, "but written in bitter prose, and no hint of enchantment anywhere. But, thank God, you are come! I have passed a dismal time of expectation, I promise you." I added softly, "I have something secret—we will sup first, man—I shall amaze you! We must talk apart presently."

He bowed his head.

Three more boatmen arrived, giving us the company of five of them. Soon there was a hearty sound of frying and a smell of good things upon the air. Pitt put plates and glasses upon the cabin table, two great bowls of punch were brewed, and in a little time we had all fallen to. I whispered Wilkinson, who sat next me, "These boatmen know nothing of our business; I shall have to take Mr. Mason apart and arrange with him. These fellows may not be fit for our service. Let no hint escape you."

"Right, sir," said he.

This I said to disarm his suspicions should he see me talking alone with Mr. Mason. He entertained us with an account of his excursion to London; and then, partly to appease the profound curiosity of the boatmen and partly to save time when I should come to confer with my relative, I gave them the story of my shipwreck, and told how I had met with the schooner and how I had managed to escape with her.

"And now, Mason," said I, "whilst our friends here empty these bowls, come you with me to the cook-room." And with that we quitted the cabin.

"D'ye mean to tell me, Paul," was the first question my relative asked, "that this vessel was on the ice eight-and-forty years?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Surely you dream?"

"I think not."

"What we have been eating and drinking—is that forty-eight years old, too?"

"Ay, and older."

"Well, such a thing shall make me credulous

enough to duck old women for witches. But what brandy—what brandy! Never had spirit such a bouquet. Every pint is worth its weight in guineas to a rich man. To think of Deal boatmen and niggers swilling such nectar!”

“Mason,” said I, speaking low, “give me now your attention. In the run of this schooner are ten chests loaded with money, bars of silver and gold, and jewellery. This vessel was a pirate, and her people valued their booty at ninety to a hundred thousand pounds.

His jaw fell; he stared as if he knew not whether it was he or I that was mad.

“Here is evidence that I speak the truth,” said I. “A little sample only—but look at it!” And I put the pirate captain’s watch into his hand.

He eyed it as though he discredited the intelligence of his sight, turned it about, and returned it to me with a faint “Heaven preserve me!” Then said he, still faintly, “You found some of the pirates alive?”

“No.”

“Who told you that the people of the vessel valued their plunder at that amount?”

I answered by giving him the story of the recovery of the Frenchman.

He listened with a gaze of consternation: I saw how it was; he believed my sufferings had affected my reason. There was only one way to settle his mind; I took a lanthorn, and asked him to follow me. As we passed through the cabin I whispered Wilkinson that I meant to show my relative the lading below, and bade him keep the Deal men about him. I had the keys of the chests in my pocket: lifting the after-hatch, we entered the lazarette, and Mason gazed about him with astonishment. But I was in too great a hurry to return to suffer him to idly stand and stare. I opened the second hatch and descended into the run, and crawling to the jewel chest opened it, removed a few of the small-arms, and bade him look for himself.

“Incredible! incredible!” he cried. “Is it possible! is it possible! Well, to be sure!” And for some moments he could find no more to say, so amazed and confounded was he.

I quickly showed him the gold and silver ingots and then returned the firearms and locked the chests.

"*These*," said I emphatically, pointing to the cases, "have been my difficulty; not the lading, though there is value there too. My crew know nothing of these chests: of their value, I mean; they believe them cases of small-arms. How am I to get them ashore? If I tell the truth, they will be seized as piratical plunder. If I equivocate, I may tumble into a pit of difficulties. I durst not carry them to the Thames, the river swarms with thieves and Custom House people. I am terrified to linger here, lest I be boarded and the booty discovered. There is but one plan, I think: we must hire some Deal smugglers to run these chests and the cargo for us. The boat now alongside might serve, and I don't doubt the men are to be had at their own price."

My relative had regained his wits, which the sight of the treasure had temporarily scattered, and surveyed me thoughtfully whilst I spoke; and then said, "Let us return to the fire; I think I have a better scheme than yours."

The men still sat around the table talking. Some liquor yet lay in one of the bowls, and the fellows were happy enough. I smiled at Wilkinson as I passed, that he might suppose

our inspection below very satisfactory, and I saw him look meaningly and pleasantly at Washington Cromwell, who sat with a laced hat on his head.

“Paul,” said Mason, sitting down and folding his arms, “your smuggling plan will not do. It would be the height of madness to trust those chests to the risks of running and to the honesty of the rogues engaged in that business.”

“What is to be done?”

“Tell me your lading,” said he.

I gave it to him as accurately as I could.

“Why,” he exclaimed, “a single boat would take a long time to discharge ye—observe the perils—several boats would mean a large number of men; they would eat you up; they would demand so much, you would have nothing left. And suppose they opened the chests! No, your scheme is worthless.”

“What’s to do, then, in God’s name?”

“I’ll tell you!” he exclaimed, smiling with the complacency of a man who is master of a great fancy. “I shall sail to Dover at once. ’Tis now a quarter past four. Give me twelve hours to

make Dover: I shall post straight to London and be there by early morning. Now, Paul, attend you to this. To-day is Wednesday; by to-morrow night you must contrive to bring your ship to an anchor off Barking Level."

"The Thames!" I cried.

He nodded.

I looked at him anxiously. He leaned to me, putting his hand on my leg.

"I own a lighter," said he: "she will be alongside of you at dusk. I have people of my own whom I can trust. The lighter will empty your hold and convey the lading to a ship chartered by me, arrived from the Black Sea on Sunday and lying in the Pool. The stuff can be sold from that ship as it is—"

"But the chests—the chests, Mason!"

"They shall be lowered into another boat, and taken ashore and put into a waggon that will be in waiting—I in it—and driven to my home."

I clapped him on the shoulder in a transport.

"Nobly schemed indeed!" I cried; "but have we nothing to fear from the Customs people?"

"No, not low down the river and at dark.

You bring up for convenience, d'ye see. Mind it is dark when you anchor. A lighter and boat shall be awaiting you. It is down the river, you know, that all the lumpers drop with the lighters they go adrift in from ships' sides. There's more safety in smuggling over Thames mud than on this coast shingle. One thought more: you say that Wilkinson believes the chests hold small-arms?"

"Yes."

"Then account to him for sending the chests away separately by saying that I have found a purchaser, and that they are going to him direct. You have your cue—you see all!"

"All."

"Let me hurry, then, Paul; that brandy should fetch you half a guinea a pint. You are in luck's way, Paul. See that you bring your ship along safely. Till to-morrow night!"

He clasped and wrung my hand and ran into the cabin.

"Now, lads, off with us!" he cried. "Off to Dover! Put me ashore there smartly and you shall find your account. Off now—time presses."

Five minutes afterwards the boat was gone.

When fortune falls in love with a man she makes him a bounteous mistress. Everything fell out as I could have desired. We got our anchor at five, and by daybreak were off Hastings jogging quietly along towards London river, the weather conveniently obscure, the wind south, and forty hours before us to do the run in. I exactly explained my relative's scheme to Wilkinson and the others, who declared themselves perfectly satisfied, Wilkinson adding that though he had not objected to the Deal smuggling project he throughout considered the risk too heavy to adventure. I told them that Mr. Mason believed he could immediately find a purchaser for the small-arms, in which case they would have to be sent privately ashore; and to give a proper colour to this ruse I made them pack away all the remaining weapons in the arms-room and carry them to the run, ready to be taken with the other chests.

Once fairly round the Forelands half my anxieties fell from me. There was no longer the French cruiser or privateer to be feared, and how-

ever wonderingly the people of my own country's vessels might stare at the uncommon figure of my schooner, they could find no excuse to board us. Besides, as I have said, I was greatly helped by the weather, which continuing hazy, though happily never so thick as to oblige me to stop, delivered me to the sight only of such vessels as passed close, and offered me as a mere smudge to the shore.

We arrived off Barking Level on the Thursday night, and dropped anchor close to a lighter that lay there with a large boat hanging by her. It was then very dark. The first person to come on board was Mason. He was followed by several men, one of whom he introduced to me as his head clerk, who would see to the unloading of the schooner and to the transhipment of the goods to the ship in the Pool. He informed me that there was a covered van waiting on shore; and telling Wilkinson that the small-arms had been disposed of, and that Mr. Mason would hand over the proceeds on our calling at his office, I went with a party of my relative's men into the run and presently had the

whole of the chests in the boat. Mason went with her.

Then, as she disappeared in the darkness, but not till then, did I draw the first easy breath I had fetched since the hour of the collision of the *Laughing Mary* with the iceberg. A sob shook me: I had gone through much: many wonderful things had happened to me: I had been delivered from such perils that the mere recollection of them will stir my hair, though it is years since; my duty I knew, and I discharged it by withdrawing to my cabin and kneeling with humble and grateful heart before the throne of that Being to whom I owed everything.

POSTSCRIPT.

HERE concludes the remarkable narrative of Mr. Paul Rodney. It is to be wished that he had found the patience to tell us a little more. The circumstance of his dying in 1823, worth 31,000*l.*, leads me to suspect that his associate Tassard greatly exaggerated the value of the treasure. I am assured that he lived very quietly, and that the lady he married, who bore him two children, both of whom died young, was of a nunlike simplicity of character and loved show and extravagance as little as her husband. Hence there is no reason to suppose that he squandered any portion of the fortune that had in the most extraordinary manner ever heard of fallen into his hands. I have ascertained that he very substantially discharged the great obligation that his relative Mason laid him under, and that his three

men received a thousand pounds apiece. It is possible, then, that the pirates were themselves deceived, that what they had taken to be gold or silver ingots were not all so ; or it might be that the case of jewellery was less valuable than the admiring and astonished eyes of a plain sailor, who admits that he had never before seen such a sight, figured it. Be this, however, as it may, it is nevertheless certain, as proved by Mr. Rodney's last will and testament, that he did uncommonly well out of his adventure on the ice.

Whatever may be thought of his story of the Frenchman's restoration to life, in other directions Mr. Rodney's accuracy seems unimpeachable. It is quite conceivable that a stoutly-built vessel locked up in the ice and thickly glazed, should continue in an excellent state of preservation for years. The confession of his superstitious fears exhibits honesty and candour. It is related that a Captain Warren, master of an English merchant-ship, found a derelict (in August, 1775) that had long been ice-bound, with her cabins filled with the bodies of the frozen crew. " His own sailors, however, would not suffer him to search the

vessel thoroughly, through superstition, and wished to leave her immediately." A pity they did not try their hands at thawing one of the poor fellows : the result might have kept Mr. Rodney's strange experience in countenance !

Accounts of vast bodies of ice, such as that which Mr. Rodney fell in with, will be found in the South Atlantic Directory. For instance :—

" Sir James C. Ross crossed Weddel's track in Lat. 65° S., and where he had found an open sea, Ross found an ice-pack of an impassable character, along which he sailed for 160 miles ; and again, when only one degree beyond the track of Cook, who had no occasion to enter the pack, Ross was navigating among it for fifty-six days.

" But these appear insignificant when compared with a body of ice reputed to have been passed by twenty-one ships during the months of December, 1854, and January, February, March, and April, 1855, floating in the South Atlantic from Lat 44° S., Long. 28° W., to Lat. 40° S., Long. 20° W. Its elevation in no case exceeded 300 feet. The first account of it was received from the

Great Britain, which in December, 1854, was reported to have steamed 50 miles along the outer side of the longer shank." One ship was lost upon it : others embayed.

THE END.

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